
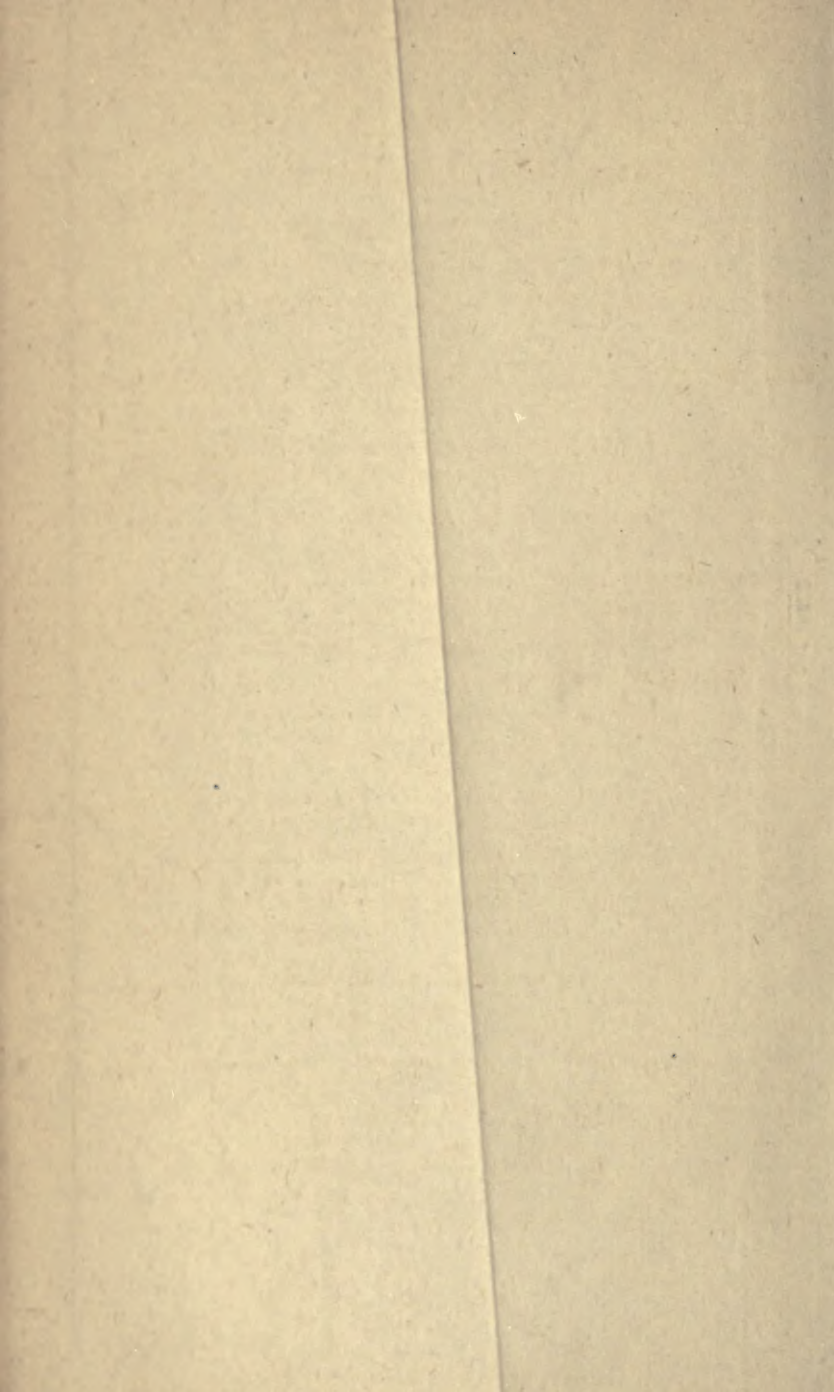


THE
LAND HUNGER:
LIFE UNDER MONOPOLY





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THE HUNGRY FORTIES

Life under the Bread Tax

DESCRIPTIVE LETTERS AND
OTHER TESTIMONIES FROM
CONTEMPORARY WITNESSES

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY MRS COBDEN UNWIN

FIRST EDITION, 1904. Illustrated. Large crown 8vo. Cloth, 6s.
(*Re-issued*, 1909, in the Reformer's Bookshelf. Cloth, 3s. 6d.)

PEOPLE'S EDITION, 1905, in Paper Cover, 6d.
(*Reprinted*, 1906.)

ABRIDGED EDITION, 1910, in Paper Cover, 1d.
(*Reprinted*, 1910.)

COMPLETE PENNY EDITION (110,000), 1912, sewn.
(*Reprinted* [100,000], 1912.)

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THE HUNGRY FORTIES

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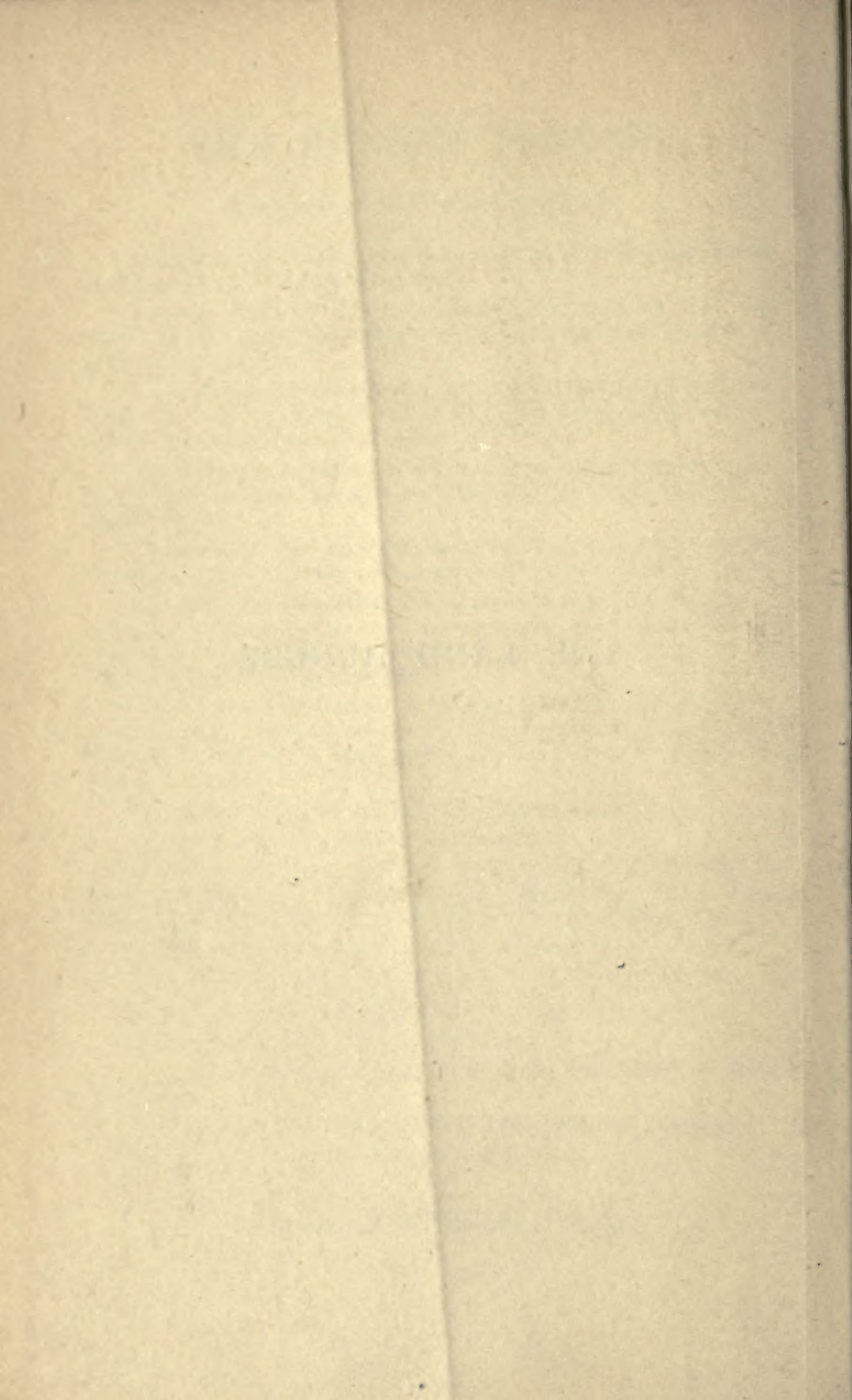
"A most valuable contribution to the Free Trade cause."—*Major Seely, M.P.*

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LONDON : T. FISHER UNWIN.

THE LAND HUNGER



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THE LAND HUNGER

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LIFE UNDER MONOPOLY

DESCRIPTIVE LETTERS AND
OTHER TESTIMONIES FROM
THOSE WHO HAVE SUFFERED

WITH AN INTRODUCTION
BY MRS COBDEN UNWIN
AND AN ESSAY BY
BROUGHAM VILLIERS

[The re-making
of England]

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T. FISHER UNWIN
LONDON: ADELPHI TERRACE
LEIPSIC: INSELSTRASSE 20

[1913]

FIRST PUBLISHED IN 1913

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TO THE MEMORY OF
RICHARD COBDEN,
WHO LOVED HIS NATIVE LAND,
THESE PAGES ARE DEDICATED
BY HIS DAUGHTER,
IN THE HOPE THAT HIS DESIRE—
“FREE TRADE IN LAND”—
MAY BE FULFILLED.



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INTRODUCTION

IN the summer of last year the following letter appeared in some hundreds of newspapers throughout England and Scotland:—

“OATSCROFT, HEYSHOTT,
MIDHURST, SUSSEX.
15th June 1912.

“THE LAND HUNGER

“Eight years ago we wrote an open letter to the Press inviting readers to send letters and documents describing their memories and experiences of life in rural England under Protection. We received a large and remarkable response from the whole country, with the result that the volume now known as ‘The Hungry Forties’ was prepared and published. This volume was made up almost entirely of information voluntarily supplied by men and women who knew the difficulty of living in a time when Protection (Tariff Reform) and the Corn Tax still robbed the people.

Introduction

“We have always felt that in England Free Trade has not had a fair opportunity of being a complete success whilst the land on which the people live, and from which the food of the country might be obtained, is still in bondage. To-day we need Free Land to give Free Trade its full scope. Richard Cobden, in his last speech at Rochdale on November 23rd, 1864, said :—

“‘If I were five-and-twenty or thirty, instead of, unhappily, twice that number of years, I would take Adam Smith in hand—I would not go beyond him, I would have no politics in it—I would take Adam Smith in hand, and I would have a League for Free Trade in Land, just as we had a League for Free Trade in Corn.’

“Holding these views, we should be glad if readers of this letter would correspond with us and communicate their experiences of land renting and land buying, especially in connection with small holdings and allotments, rack renting, land going out of cultivation, arbitrary ejections with no compensation—or inadequate compensation. Illustrations of what could be done even now to cultivate the common and waste lands of their district, or to restore to cultivation lands that have gone out of use, might be given.

“In connection with this subject is the burning one of cottage accommodation; here perhaps

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some readers will add information in regard to cottages in their neighbourhood; the tied house system, the difficulty of obtaining houses, and the high rents paid in many places; cottages with inadequate accommodation for families and therefore insanitary and leading to immorality. Information also might be given in regard to the difficulties in the way of marriage of young people from lack of house room, with the result of emigration to foreign countries or to the towns.

“Other subjects and points will suggest themselves and the experiences of the past and of the present will all be of interest and value, and of service in bringing these great questions before the country. As we promised in connection with ‘The Hungry Forties’ so we now promise correspondents that a book will be prepared and published as a result of this enquiry. Any documents addressed to our care will be copied and returned if desired.

“(Signed)

T. FISHER UNWIN.

JANE COBDEN UNWIN.”

The present book is the result of the issue of this letter to newspapers throughout England and Scotland, and the succeeding chapters are the harvest of a large and widely gathered correspondence.

Introduction

My experience must be that of many others who have lived in, and who have come in contact with, rural England. The desire on the part of the labourers to obtain small holdings or allotments, the difficulties and delays in obtaining land on almost any terms, not only for the purpose of tillage or farming, but for building, are apparent throughout rural England to those who can hear and see. Hitherto the powers given to district and county councils have been inadequate, and to a large extent ineffectual. No doubt labourer's cottages do not yield an adequate return for money invested, for the labourer with the present rate of wages is unable to pay a rent to cover the interest on the outlay. At the same time the necessity for an increase in the supply of cottages is yearly becoming more acute. Many cottages are falling into decay, or are insanitary, and local authorities are demanding their destruction, and at the same time, though they have the power, these authorities have not the will to replace them.

This all points to the necessity for legislation. To keep the labourers on the land, and to attract them back from the towns, some form of loans

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and land banks is required, and our legislators must recognise this when dealing with the land and cottage question.

As I have said, the Land Hunger is only too apparent to any one who has lived in rural England, and its object lesson is the lack of opportunity the agricultural labourers have of obtaining land and houses, the possession of which gives that self-reliance and self-respect found among the peasantry across the Channel. For generations the English peasantry have tilled the land as labourers, and as labourers we find them to-day with little or no hope of change.

It is true that since the abolition of the Corn Laws wages have slowly risen, and the necessities of life have improved in quality, in quantity, and in price — to the advantage of the labourers. But to-day they are dependents on the landlords; and dependents they will remain until the State steps in, and enables the agricultural labourer to enter into his rightful heritage.

The land question is no party question, for the land is owned by Conservatives, by Liberals, by Unionists, and by Radicals, and good and

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bad owners and employers are to be found in all parties. The root of the evil lies in the fact that whether by inheritance from feudal ancestors, by purchase, by war lords, or cotton lords, State pensioners, or political millionaires, the land is in the grip of privilege and of the few, and we look for the coming statesman—Tory, Liberal, or Socialist—who will free it from the land monopolist and plutocrat.

The extracts printed here are taken from my father's speeches, writings, and letters, and they cover a period of more than twenty years. They show clearly that the land question was ever on his mind, and that he desired to see the English peasantry restored to and contentedly living on their native soil.

*Richard Cobden at Derby, 10th
December 1841 :—*

“When I look into the question of the Land Tax from its origin to the present time, I am bound to exclaim that it exhibits an instance of selfish legislation secondary only in audacity to the Corn Law and provision monopolies. Would you, gentlemen, who have not looked into the subject—but go home and study it, I entreat

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you—would you believe that the Land Tax, in its origin, was nothing but a commutation rent charge to be paid to the State by the landowners, in consideration of the Crown giving up all the feudal tenures and services by which they held the land? Yes, exactly 149 years ago, when the landed aristocracy got possession of the throne in the person of King William, at our glorious revolution they got rid of all the old feudal tenures and services . . . which yielded the whole revenue of the State; and besides which the land had to find soldiers and maintain them. These incumbrances were given up for a *bona fide* rent charge upon the land of four shillings in the pound; and the land was valued and assessed, 149 years ago, at nine millions a year; and upon that valuation the Land Tax is still laid.

“Now, you gentlemen of the middle classes, whose windows are counted, and who have a schedule sent you every year, in which you are required to state the number of your dogs and horses; and you who have not window and dog duty to pay, but who consume sugar, and coffee, and tea, and who pay a tax for every pound you consume—I say to you, remember that the landowners have never had their land revalued from 1696 to the present time. Yes, the landowners are now paying upon a valuation made

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just 149 years ago. The collector who comes to you to count the apertures through which Heaven's light enters your dwellings, who leaves you a schedule in which to enter your dogs, horses, and carriages, passes over the landowner, leaves no schedule there in which to enter last years rent roll under certain penalties; but he takes out his old valuation, dated 1696, and gives the landlord a receipt in full, dated 1841, upon the valuation made a century and a half ago. I say we are indebted to Sir Robert Peel for calling our attention to this subject.

“I exhort the middle classes to look to it. It is a war on their pockets that is being carried on; and I hope to see Societies formed calling upon the legislature to revalue the land, and put a taxation upon it in proportion to that of other countries, and in proportion to the wants of the State. I hope I shall see petitions calling upon them to revalue the land, and that the agitation will go on collaterally with the agitation for the total and immediate repeal of the Corn Laws, and I shall contribute my mite for such a purpose. There must be a total abolition of all taxes upon food, and we should raise at least £20,000,000 a year upon the land, and then the owners would be richer than any landed proprietary in the world.”

Introduction

*Speech in the House of Commons, 13th
March 1845.*

“There are many tenants who could improve their land if they were made secure; they either have capital themselves, or their friends can advance it; but with the want of leases, with the want of security, they are deterred from laying out their money. Everything was kept ‘from year to year.’ It is impossible to farm properly unless money is invested in land for more than a year. A man ought to begin farming with a prospect of waiting eight years before he can see a return for what he must do in the first year or two. Tenants, therefore, are prevented by their landlords from carrying on cultivation properly. They are made servile and dependent, disinclined to improvement, afraid to let the landlord see that they could improve their farms, lest he should pounce on them for an increase of rent.”¹

Speech in London, 17th December 1845.

“If they force a discussion of this question of taxation; if they make it understood by the people of this country how the landowners

¹ “Speeches of Richard Cobden,” vol. i. p. 136.

Introduction

here, 150 years ago, deprived the sovereign of his feudal rights over them; how the aristocracy retained their feudal rights over the minor copyholders; how they made a bargain with the king to give him 4s. in the pound upon their landed rentals, as a quit charge for having dispensed with these rights of feudal service from them; if the country understand as well as I think I understand, how afterwards this landed aristocracy passed a law to make the valuation of their rental final, the bargain originally being that they should pay 4s. in the pound of the yearly rateable value of their rental, as it was worth to let for, and then stopped the progress of the rent by a law, making the valuation final—that the land has gone on increasing tenfold in value in many parts of Scotland, and fivefold in many parts of England, while the Land-Tax has remained the same as it was 150 years ago—if they force us to understand how they have managed to exempt themselves from the probate and legacy duty on real property—how they have managed, sweet innocents that taxed themselves so heavily, to transmit their estates from sire to son without taxes or duties, while the tradesman who has accumulated by thrifty means his small modicum of fortune is subject at his death to taxes and stamps before his children can inherit his property; if they force us to

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understand how they have exempted their tenants' houses from taxes, their tenants' horses from taxes, their dogs from taxes, their draining-tiles from taxes—if they force these things to be understood, they will be making as rueful a bargain as they have already made by resisting the abolition of the Corn Law.”¹

In a letter to Mr Ashworth, from Midhurst, 7th October 1850, Richard Cobden writes :—

“I long to live to see an agricultural labourer strike for wages.”

In a letter to Mr Bright, from Midhurst, 1st October 1851 :—

“But to return to the land customs of this country. We have made no progress upon the subject of primogeniture during the last twenty years. Public opinion is either indifferent or favourable to the system of large properties kept together by entail. If you want a proof, see how every successful trader buys an estate, and tries to perpetuate his name in connexion with ‘that ilk’ by creating an eldest son. It is probably the only question on which, if an attempt were made to abolish the present system, France

¹ “Speeches of Richard Cobden,” vol. i. p. 177.

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could be again roused to revolution; and yet we are in England actually hugging our feudal fetters! But we are a Chinese people. What a lucky thing it is that our grandmothers did not deform their feet *à la Chinoise*! If so, we should have had a terrible battle to emancipate women's toes. But, however unprepared the public may be for our views on the land question, I am ready to incur any obloquy in the cause of economical truth. And it is, I confess, on this class of questions, rather than on plans of organic reform, that I feel disposed to act the part of a pioneer."¹

The following is an extract from his annual address at Rochdale, November 1863, which provoked the famous controversy with Mr J. T. Delane, the editor of the *Times*:—

“The condition of the English peasantry has no parallel on the face of the earth. (Hear.) You have no other peasantry but that of England which is entirely divorced from the land. There is no other country in the world where you will not find men holding the plough and turning up the furrow upon their own freehold. I don't want any agrarian outrages by which we should

¹ “The Life of Richard Cobden,” by Lord Morley, p. 561.

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change all this, but this I find, and it is quite consistent with human nature, that wherever I go the condition of the people is generally pretty good, in comparison with the power they have to take care of themselves; and if you have a class entirely destitute of political power, while in another country they possess it, they will be treated there with more consideration, they will have greater advantages, they will be better educated, and have a better chance of possessing property than in a country where they are deprived of political power. (Hear.)”¹

Mr Thorold Rogers in his book, “Cobden and Political Opinion,” in the chapter on the land question, writes:—

“Another passage [of Cobden’s] is equally significant. ‘It is no use your talking of your army and navy, your export and your imports; it is no use telling me you have a small portion of your people exceedingly well off. I want to make the test in a comparison of the majority of the people against a majority in any other country. I say that with regard to some things in foreign countries we do not compare so favourably.’

“Again: ‘I believe we have no adequate conception of what the amount of production might

¹ “The Life of Richard Cobden,” by Lord Morley, p. 895.

Introduction

be from a limited surface of land, provided only the amount of capital were sufficient. There is no reason whatever why I should not live to see the day when a man who lays out £1,000 on fifty acres of land will be a more independent, more prosperous, and more useful man, than many farmers who now occupy five or six hundred acres, with not one quarter or one tenth of the capital necessary to carry on the cultivation.'

"Again, after having given two arguments in justification of the practice which casts 'local taxation' on real estate, he adds, 'But I have another reason why this property should bear those local burdens, and it is this—it is the only property which not only does not diminish in value, but, in a country growing in population and advancing in prosperity, it always increases in value, and without any help from the owners. These gentlemen complain that those rates have increased in amount during a recent period. I will admit, if they like, that those local rates have increased. During the last hundred years they have increased, I will say, seven millions of money. That is taking an outside view. Well, but the real property upon which those rates are levied—the land and houses of this country—has increased in value four times as much; and therefore they stand in an infinitely better situation now, paying twelve millions of local rates,

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than ever they did before in any former period in the history of this country.'"¹

"Fortunately, we are not now able to say, as the *Times* said in 1863, that large farming tends to produce more stock. We have learnt, that as far as the food of the people is concerned, we are the worst off among European countries. We have reason to believe that the more land is distributed the more produce is obtained, and that if the peasant were not 'divorced from the soil,' we should have a greater abundance of the conveniences and necessaries of life. To bring about the change which shall give plenty instead of scarceness, no reasonable man, least of all no intelligent economist, would advocate anything more than that Free Trade in Land which Cobden wished he had strength and youth to carry out, and which consists in removing all obstructions to the sale of land, and all aids to its accumulation, in order to give a fair trial to the respective powers of large farming under a precarious tenure or a lease, and small farming on a freehold or on a perpetual occupancy."²

Mr Thorold Rogers' book is commended to those who desire a further study of the subject.

¹ "Cobden and Political Opinion," p. 731.

² *Ibid.*, p. 108.

Introduction

Mr J. M. Scovell, an American visitor to England, gives in *The Overland Monthly* an account of his visit to Dunford, and a conversation with Richard Cobden. He says:—

“ He seemed most solicitous about the condition of the English peasantry, and more ready to converse upon this subject than any other. His fine eyes filled with tears as he explained to me the fearful ignorance and destitution among so many thousands who could never hope to turn a furrow of land which they might call their own. It was here the character of the man shone clear as day. He said there was no class in England, as there was in America, who, if they did not at first own their land, with thrift and reasonable economy could soon become owners in fee of as many broad acres as they could cultivate. He talked on the subject till after midnight, deploring the fact that the English peasantry were divorced from the land on which they lived. He named his neighbour, Lord Leconfield, who owned a park with twelve miles of stone fence protecting it, its owner too rich to spend half of his income, and rich enough to buy all the land within a day’s ride of him.

“ The last political prediction I heard Cobden make was that the laws regulating the tenure of lands must change (and while he might not

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live to see it I would), I would live to see a revolution which would for ever settle all disputes between English landlords and tenants. This question of elevating this disfranchised class, he said, was the one nearest to his heart."

*Speech delivered at Rochdale, 23rd November 1864.
The last speech which Mr Cobden made.*

"Now, here are the Edinburgh Reviewer's own words in speaking of the domestic reforms that await our attention:—

"At home, we have still to apply to land and to labour that freedom which has worked such marvels in the case of capital and commerce."

"Bear in mind, that is not my language about free trade in land. But I say 'Amen' to it. If I were five-and-twenty or thirty, instead of, unhappily, twice that number of years, I would take Adam Smith in hand—I would not go beyond him, I would have no politics in it—I would take Adam Smith in hand, and I would have a League for free trade in land just as we had a League for free trade in corn. You will find just the same authority in Adam Smith for the one as for the other; and if it were only taken up as it must be taken up to succeed,

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not as a political, revolutionary, Radical, Chartist notion, but taken up on politico-economic grounds, the agitation would be certain to succeed; and if you can supply free trade to land and to labour, too—that is, by getting rid of those abominable restrictions in your parish settlements, and the like—then, I say, the man who does that will have done for England probably more than we have been able to do by making free trade in corn.”¹

In these quotations it is clearly shown that from the beginning of the Free Trade agitation for the abolition of taxes on food, Richard Cobden insisted that Free Trade in land must follow. It is not claimed he was the first to demand Land Reform, or that he was the first to call attention to the grievances under which the peasantry of this country laboured; but he did conclusively show the need for freeing land to give Free Trade its full scope, and he and his fellow workers left behind them a legacy to his generation—to free the land from its burden as they had freed Trade.

The one reform is as great a necessity for the well being of this country as is the other, but

¹ “Speeches by Richard Cobden, M.P.,” vol. ii. p. 493.

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in the last half century no statesman has arisen capable of grappling with this gigantic task, no one has arisen to grasp the "Free Land" banner, and with it storm the citadels which guard and over-shadow our country villages and towns, and destroy the healthy life of rural England.

J. C. U.

HEYSHOTT, SUSSEX,
May 1913.

CHAPTER I

SCHOOLS OF LAND REFORM

THE speeches and writings of her father quoted in Mrs Cobden Unwin's Introduction to this book go far to earn for him the title of prophet. Ever since Cobden's day the land question, though long ignored by front bench statesmen, has been a leading one with political thinkers. It could hardly be otherwise. It is too sadly true that the peasantry of this country have less hold on the soil than those of any other land under the sun. The fact itself is the cause of bitter hardship; the manner in which it has been brought about has bred a slumbering resentment from the slow Saxon labourers of the south and the fiery crofters of the north. Of this resentment the letters printed in the following chapters will furnish proof; for the present, it is more to our purpose to trace the land movement among the thinkers who, since his day, have followed Cobden's lead.

The Land Hunger

Earlier Land Reformers concerned themselves mainly with the absurdities of our laws of primogeniture and entail, with the expense and difficulty that attended the sale and transfer of land, with the abuses of game-preserving and the like. On these alone it was easy to raise a formidable indictment of the English land system. Assuming the justice and desirability of private ownership of land, and before the days of Henry George these were not widely questioned in this country, it was at any rate desirable that land should pass readily and cheaply from incompetent hands into those of men who could use it to the best advantage. Our land laws offended almost as much against the *laissez-faire* individualism of the seventies, as against the more socialistic conceptions of our own day. A vigorous propaganda was carried on in favour of "free trade in land," according to the conceptions of the time, which has had the curious effect of suggesting the Tory land policy of to-day.

Before passing on to the more modern schools of thought on the question, it would be well to summarise the case for "free trade," coupled with private ownership, in land. The extent to

Free Trade in Land

which land had been concentrated in the hands of a few large owners was lamented then as now, and the difficulties placed in the way of its wider distribution by the law of primogeniture and the practice of entails were insisted on. It was too readily assumed that our peculiar land laws made only for concentration, and that with free trade in land economic forces would suffice to distribute it more readily in the most socially beneficial manner. The concentration of vast tracts of land, in the colonies and other new countries, in the hands of syndicates and rich speculators throws an unexpected light on this optimism. It is clear, of course, that entail and settlement render it very difficult for a great estate, once formed, to be broken up into smaller freeholds; but the very feudalism that makes it hard to obtain a democratic distribution of British land, tends to check the rapid amalgamation of properties by purchase. If an improvident British landowner cannot readily sell, it is equally difficult for a wealthy speculator to buy him out wholesale as for his tenants to convert their farms into freeholds.

In truth the ideas current among politicians on the subject of land reform before the third

The Land Hunger

Reform Bill were crude enough. To some of them at least reform meant little for democracy.

“It is more than doubtful,” says one, “whether much can be done by the Legislature, at least directly, to raise the condition of the agricultural labourer, *unless it be the sub-division of parish lands into plots suitable for labourers' allotments.*”

The words in italics illustrate the gulf fixed between the advanced thought of thirty years ago and that of to-day. Still further enclosure of common lands was the only definite suggestion for relieving the dispossessed peasantry, whose common lands had so recently been confiscated by legalised robbery. The propaganda carried on by the followers of Henry George and Dr Alfred Russel Wallace, still more, perhaps, the enfranchisement of the rural labourers, changed all this. The general election of 1885 saw the labourer installed as the arbiter of politics. The return of Mr Joseph Arch to Parliament would have been an event of first-class importance if the organisation of the rural workers had been more complete, if their Union had evolved a political programme, and been able to reinforce Mr Arch with other direct representatives of the

“Three Acres and a Cow”

agricultural workers. As it was, the fact was interesting as a symbol, and as a prophecy of what may happen some day. The “unauthorised programme” of Mr Chamberlain, and the famous “three acres and a cow” policy were equally significant. Contemporary radicalism grasped the possibilities of the position, and no longer thought it “doubtful whether much could be done for the agricultural labourer.” However out of date the ideas of Mr Chamberlain and Mr Jesse Collins may now appear, this propaganda at least shows a more democratic conception of the land question. Liberalism had hitherto appealed largely to the farmer, with promises of security for unexhausted improvements and readier means to purchase his farm, in order to wean him from his yearning for a tax on foreign corn. But now the farmers’ votes were swamped in the wider suffrages of the labourers. The land hunger, among the labourers, which up to this time had been disregarded in England, and, as manifested in the Land League agitation, had been considered in Ireland a dishonest thing, now for the first time engaged the interest of a front bench politician.

That Mr Chamberlain was in earnest those

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who marvel most at the inconsistencies of his career need not doubt. You cannot explain the magnetism of Mr Chamberlain unless you realise that behind every agitation he has led there has been a real, if temporary, enthusiasm for the love of the moment, whether for Free Trade or Tariff Reform, for democracy or for the Lords. Naturally, when the reform of the land laws was engaging his attention, the fierce agitation, then at its height in the Highlands of Scotland, attracted him. The Highland land war of the eighties is hardly less remarkable, though so much less known, than the Irish agitation of the same period.

“In 1881,” to quote Mr James Cameron, the historian of the revolt, “there were ominous signs of an uprising [in the Highlands], and men who knew the wretched condition of the islanders saw the beginning of the revolution which must inevitably come. The strange spectacle could be witnessed in the streets of Glasgow of Highlanders standing in its principal thoroughfares with little tables in front of them, asking passers-by to sign a petition favouring the appointment of a Royal Commission to inquire into the condition of the Crofters.”

Revolt in the Highlands

The Commission was appointed with power to fix fair rents in the crofter counties. Though consisting entirely of the landlords' friends, it cut down the rents which had been squeezed from the unhappy crofters tremendously. On the estates of Major William Fraser

"upwards of 360 tenants applied to the Commission for judicial determination of what would constitute a fair rent. There were examples of reductions to the extent of a full half having been ordered; the average decreases exceeded a third, while of the arrears, amounting to close on £7000, nearly two-thirds were cancelled."

It was the same on other estates. The Duke of Argyll had claimed that his estates in the island of Tiree were considerately managed. It was a model island, yet his *fellow landlords* of the Commission thought otherwise. They reduced the rents of the island from £1,251 to £922, and of £2,717 of arrears claimed by the Duke they cancelled no less than £1,191!

All this time there was something not unlike civil war, on a small scale, going on in the Hebrides. In April 1882 what is known as the "Battle of the Braes" occurred in the Isle of Skye. A sheriff's officer with fifty Glasgow

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police, who had been sent into the island to arrest some men who had resisted an ejectment summons, were met by a hostile crowd of crofters with their families. When the police proceeded to make the arrests, Mr Cameron tells us,

“stones began to be thrown, and so serious an aspect did matters assume that the police drew their batons and charged. This was the signal for a general attack. Huge boulders darkened the horizon, large sticks and flails were brandished and brought down with crushing force upon the police—the prisoners coming in for a share. One difficult point had to be captured, and as the expedition approached the dangerous position it was seen to be strongly occupied with men and women armed with stones and boulders. Finally it was agreed to attempt to force a way through a narrow gully. A rush was made for the pass, and from the heights a fearful fusilade of stones descended. The advance was checked, the party could neither advance nor recede. For two minutes the expedition stood exposed to the merciless shower of missiles. Many were struck, and a number were more or less injured; the situation was highly dangerous. Raising a yell that might have been heard at a distance of two miles, the crofters, maddened by the apprehension of some of the oldest men in the township,

Mr Chamberlain in Glasgow

rushed on the police, each person armed with huge stones, which on approaching near enough they discharged with a vigour that nothing could resist. The women were by far the most troublesome assailants. Thinking apparently that the constables would offer them no resistance, they approached to within a few yards' distance and poured a fearful volley into the compact mass."

The police, however, succeeded in effecting their object.

In other parts of the Hebrides scenes equally stirring took place, and when Mr Chamberlain and Mr Jesse Collins visited Glasgow and the islands in 1885 the whole country was aflame. The meeting that year in the St Andrews Halls, Glasgow, was one of the most enthusiastic ever held in the place. There Mr Chamberlain threw down the gage of battle before the landlords of Scotland, and there can be no doubt that had he stuck to his enthusiasm of the moment, he could have carried the whole of the northern kingdom with him. The Highlanders, at least, as will be seen, put the land question before everything else, and were prepared to fight against Conservatives, Liberals, or anybody else for better conditions on the land. Mr

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Chamberlain soon cooled down, however ; indeed he never seems to have understood the land question at all. But Mr Chamberlain is a consummate electioneer. Instinctively, when he was on the popular side in politics, he seemed to feel the popular will, and abortive as his campaign may seem, we cannot refuse to Mr Chamberlain the credit of doing something to democratise the outlook of politicians on the land question. Since his agitation they have all been anxious to show that much *can* "be done by the Legislature to raise the condition of the agricultural labourer." It is to the credit of Mr Jesse Collins that he has never forgotten his enthusiasm for the rural labourer, however far behind the times his conception of land reform may be.

Vaguely thought out as it was, the appeal of Mr Chamberlain had doubtless its effect on the elections of 1885. There were heavy Liberal losses in the boroughs, but the position was redeemed by victories in the counties. The rural labourers of England responded to *any* policy that promised to deal with the land question. The English countrymen apparently accepted Mr Chamberlain's land promises at

Crofter M.P.'s

their surface value, and except that, as before stated, Mr Joseph Arch appeared as a Liberal-Labour representative of the rural workers, were content to return orthodox Liberals to Parliament. The Celtic fringe was more militant and less confiding. The newly enfranchised Irish peasants sent Land Leaguers to Parliament by the score; while an independent Highland party consisting of Messrs D. H. Macfarlane, Charles Frazer Macintosh, and Macdonald Cameron with Doctors Clark and Macdonald, who had won their seats by defeating Liberal candidates, appeared to represent the crofter movement. These were the most significant facts about the elections of 1885, showing as they do the universal hatred of landlordism in England, Scotland, and Ireland. We, perhaps, do not find the same enthusiasm for a progressive idea in our politics again until Mr Lloyd George raised the land question in the Budget of 1909. It was the opportunity of Mr Chamberlain's lifetime had he known how to use it. By sticking to the land question he could have compelled the Liberal Party either to accept his lead or give way before a new democratic land party. As every one

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knows, however, the opportunity was lost. The Home Rule question broke up the Liberal party, and Mr Chamberlain drifted through Liberal-Unionism to a rather tawdry Tory Democracy.

Perhaps it is as well. While Mr Jesse Collins was evolving his programme of "three acres and a cow," others less prominent in politics, but more capable in the world of thought, were working at the fundamental principles of the land question. Henry George's *Progress and Poverty* was being read in thousands of homes, and if its ideas were not perfectly grasped,¹ its glowing rhetoric was making many converts. More closely related to the general social movement was *Land Nationalisation*, by the venerable Dr Alfred Russel Wallace, who still preserves his interest in the question, and is the President of the Land Nationalisation Society. Thinkers were beginning to see the ultimate solution of the land question in some form of public ownership; and while differing among themselves about methods, were becoming fundamentally

¹ The present controversy on the "Single Tax" seems to prove that the followers of Henry George are incapable of criticising his work, and most of his opponents of understanding it.

Schools of Land Reform

divided from the ideas of Mr Jesse Collins. While the *Irish* land agitation continued mainly as a demand for "tenant right" or peasant proprietorship, the English country people prefer to obtain their holdings through the County Councils, while the towns, both of England and Scotland, desire, in the interest of the ordinary rate-payers, to acquire powers to levy rates on land values.

To some extent this is due, no doubt, to the active propaganda of the Land Nationalisation Society on the one hand, and of the United League for the Taxation of Land Values on the other. A few years ago there seemed reason to hope that these two schools of Land Reformers, those who wish to acquire land for the public by purchase, and those who aim at taking the economic rent by taxation, might come to an agreement on the basis of what is known as the "Tax and Buy Bill." It was proposed to levy a tax or rate on land values *to be assessed by the owner himself*. This valuation would be taken, whether low or high, and it would, of course, be possible for any owner to under-assess his land to any extent. The Bill, however, provided that any land required for public

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purposes, for allotments, for municipal enterprises, or any kind of State developments, could at any time be bought compulsorily *at the valuation made by the owner for purposes of taxation*. This was, of course, a perfectly safe protection against unfair assessment, and would effectively prevent the greatest difficulty in the way of municipal and social development—the monstrous prices charged for land whenever a public authority requires any.

Perhaps it is due to the missionary efforts of Mr Joseph Fels, perhaps to the progress of land taxation in the Colonies and the United States, but at present it must be confessed there appears little prospect of Land Reformers presenting a united front on this measure. When, on 19th April 1911, Mr Gordon Harvey introduced a Public Land Purchase Bill on these lines into the House of Commons, the curious sight was seen of Mr Wedgwood, most ardent of Single Taxers, joining with the landlords in bitter opposition. The advocates of the Single Tax, indeed, are coming more and more to represent the old *laissez faire* individualism brought up to date, while in the proposals of their rivals of the Land Nationalisation Society there is a

“Look at Germany”

distinct recognition of the more modern conception of social organisation. Their indictment of landlordism is the same, but the differences in their practical proposals arise from a distinct difference in philosophic outlook, and cannot be reconciled. Thus the literature of the Land Nationalisers insists not only on the right of the nation to the income derived from the rents of land, but everywhere on the necessity for effective control of its use. One of the most instructive pamphlets of the Land Nationalisation Society deals with *German Examples of Public Landownership*, and shows effectively what an enormous advantage hundreds of German local governing bodies have obtained not merely by rating land values, but by purchasing or refusing to sell land. It certainly may excite the envy of the overburdened British ratepayer to read of districts in which not only are there no rates, but where after local expenses are paid the lucky citizens receive from the Council a cash dividend yearly out of the surplus from the public lands! As this widespread municipal ownership of land and its results in Germany are so little known and are in themselves so interesting, we quote from

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another of the Society's pamphlets, *Public Property in Land*, by Mr Joseph Hyder.

“ According to the report of the German Board of Agriculture, communal forests in Germany amount to 3,350,400 acres, and belong to 12,386 districts. Undivided meadow land held in common amounts to 1,104,087 acres, and 429,468 holders have the right to use it. Cultivated fields and meadows given out in lots amount to 660,772 acres, scattered in 8,560 districts, and 382,833 families share in this. It is extraordinary to find the number of German communities that are able to defray all their local expenses out of the revenue of their own land. In many cases a cash payment is made to the citizens as their share of the communal land values. To receive a bank note instead of a demand note would indeed be a very welcome change for our own people, and German experience shows that it is no Utopian dream. If all the land were held as common property instead of only a part of it, that experience might be ours.

“ The Burgomaster of Treis, on the Moselle, writes: ‘ The Burgomastery of Treis consists of an area of 25,000 acres. Of these more than 12,500 acres belong to the parishes. All the local needs are met from the common purse. Then each Burgher receives his firing on

A Substitute for Rates

payment of half or one-third its value, and 25 to 30 acres of cultivable land for his life-time. On this public land the class without means finds work and support through almost the whole year.¹ As the parish only takes from the produce of its possessions as much as it wants for its common needs, the labourer gets almost all the produce of his toil. Such are the circumstances of almost all the lower Moselle.'

"Dr W. Kobelt writes from Schwanheim, on the Maine (Hesse-Nassau): 'In the region of Wiesbaden the number of districts which levy no local rates and taxes, or only very low ones, is so large that this arrangement seems to us the normal one.'"

"In Germany," Mr Hyder tells us, "local authorities have a free hand in land purchase. The central authorities have urged them to use it extensively, and they have not hesitated to act upon the advice. . . . The Land Nationalisation Society advocates that British communities also should be invested with a general power of land purchase instead of being restricted to purchase for certain special and narrowly defined purposes."

¹ We have been told by Tariff Reformers to "look at Germany" and the low statistics of German unemployment, quoted from month to month in the *Labour Gazette*, have, in spite of the warnings of the Board of Trade, been used to support the idea that Tariff Reform would relieve unemployment. The above suggests another and better explanation.

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The Land Nationalisation Society also advocates the purchase of land by the State itself through a National Land Commission to be appointed for the purpose. But it is not reckless as to the price to be paid for land, and while opposed to the Single Tax, advocates the reasonable taxation of land values and the basing of all compensation on the capital value at which land has been assessed for the purpose.

The Leagues for the Taxation of Land Values in England and Scotland seem definitely hostile to the purchase of land either by the local authorities or the State. As this hostility to land purchase of what are perhaps the largest, certainly the most liberally financed, of land reform organisations is the greatest practical difficulty in the way of evolving a common practical policy for all Land Reformers it would be well, perhaps, to touch in passing on the grounds on which it is based. Certainly in view of the powerful land monopoly to be attacked there is little room for division of forces among Land Reformers. In so far as and wherever this hostility is due to a definite disapproval of public administration as such, we fear reconciliation is impossible. In that case we have to deal with

The Single Taxers

a new, but perfectly definite form of individualism, and indeed many advocates of the Single Tax are extreme individualists. Now disapproval of private ownership of land much less of private appropriation of land values certainly does not commit any man to the doctrines of Socialism. Not a few people probably regard the abolition of private property in land as the most effective barrier *against* Socialism. Yet all Socialists are opposed to private property in land, and the Socialist and Labour Parties are the backbone of the movement for its abolition. And while many Single Taxers are ultra-individualists, many members, at least of the English League for the Taxation of Land Values, are not. Indeed, for some strange reason quite a number of its leading members are, or have been, avowed Socialists.¹ Such people are, of course, not opposed in principle to the acquisition and ultimate administration of land by the State, however much they may dislike purchase of it under present conditions. Whence, then, the attitude of the Leagues? In so far as it is capable of defence we think it is to be found

¹ We are not aware that any of these have yet definitely repudiated Socialism.

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in the present necessity to pay exorbitant prices whenever public bodies desire to acquire land. But if ever the ownership of land, as distinct from the economic rent, is to pass from the present holders to the community, it must be either by purchase, at however low a price, or by confiscation, and as that the latter is now advocated by no one of any consequence, the question of purchase will have to be faced at some time or other.

Be that as it may the Leagues for the Taxation of Land Values are for the present definite opponents of land purchase, even when it can be effected without extortionate compensation. They oppose Lord Strachey's idea that the County Councils should replace the Dukes as the largest landowners in the country, and, as we have seen in the case of Mr Wedgwood, oppose also the "Tax and Buy" bills of the Land Nationalisers.

Which of these two schools of Land Reformers have made the greater impression on the peoples of England and Scotland? In the latter country, as far as we can see, the Land Nationalisation Society has made little progress. Centred in Glasgow, the Scottish League for the Taxation

Two Pioneers

of Land Values exercises an enormous power in the Scottish towns, and there can be little doubt that to a very large number of the most energetic Scottish Land Reformers the Single Tax is the only acceptable solution of the question. And whereas, perhaps, in the agricultural districts of the south, and certainly throughout the Highlands, this solution is rejected, we must look to a third organisation, to be mentioned later, and not to the Land Nationalisation Society as the expression of popular feeling. In England the question is more difficult. Here the propaganda both of the followers of Henry George and of Dr Russel Wallace have been carried on side by side for a generation, and both can claim many ardent followers.

The enthusiasm and generosity of Mr Joseph Fels have enabled the Single Taxers to make a far more prominent show in recent years than their rivals. To such an extent is this so that last summer the Single Tax was the bug-bear of Toryism. This should not, however, lead us too hastily to conclude that the funds at the disposal of the two organisations represent the actual influence exerted by them. We suspect it is still true that rural England cares little

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even for the local rating of land values, and is definitely hostile to the taxation of them for national purposes. In the towns it is different. The municipalities, conscious of their great opportunities for effective social work and at their wit's end for means to finance them, are generally eager for the power to rate vacant sites and undeveloped land on their capital values. In the country, however, it is the "yellow van" of the Land Nationalisation Society that speaks of hope to the rural labourer anxious to get the use of a small holding or allotment under his County or Parish Council. However, on this matter, the letters direct from the people themselves will give better guidance to the reader than we can do.

With the Leagues for the Taxation of Land Values and the Land Nationalisation Society we must couple the Highland Land League, whose secretary, Mr C. A. Paterson, is typical of Scottish enthusiasm and energy. We cannot say whether, in reality, the LAND HUNGER is greater in the Highlands and Islands than in the more patient counties of Southern England; but it certainly is more vocal and self-conscious. The Saxon grumbles; the Celt rebels. The

Deer Forests

land movement throughout the northern counties of Scotland is touched with a revolutionary spirit of which we see very little sign in England. Hence, Mr Thomas Johnston's book, "Our Scots Noble Families," exposing ruthlessly as it does the rapine, murder, chicanery by which the ancestors of the Scottish nobility acquired their possessions, has become a classic among Scottish Land Reformers; and the point it emphasises, the scandalous origin of many existing titles, has coloured the proposals of advanced reformers in Scotland. Accepting, with the Land Nationalisers, the need for ultimate public ownership of all land, the Land League would modify the taxation proposals of the Georgians in a way never heard of elsewhere. The Highland League does not propose to levy any tax on land, developed or undeveloped, when in actual use for *any* productive purpose, but does advocate a heavy duty on land kept idle or used only for sporting purposes. The reason for this can be best understood by consulting the following table, compiled last year by Mr George Malcolm of Fort-William, a strong friend of "sport" and a defender of deer forests.

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DEER FORESTS IN SCOTLAND, 1912.

County.	No.	Extent Acres.
Caithness	7	77,900
Sutherland	24	420,033
Ross and Cromarty	55	963,119
Inverness	62	1,044,389
Argyll	26	432,748
Aberdeen	7	162,060
Banff	2	65,000
Forfar	5	64,410
Perth	9	135,157
Bute and Arran	1	5,120
	198	3,369,936

As according to the Napier Commission there were only 98 deer forests, covering 2,006,926 acres in 1883, we find that an area double that of Middlesex and Surrey has been added to the deer preserves of Scotland in less than thirty years!

As during the same period thousands of Highlanders have been driven by need from their native districts to seek land in the colonies, or to herd together in the overcrowded streets of Glasgow, we can readily understand the bitterness of feeling to which this vast extension of sporting territory gives rise.

A Drastic Proposal

Coupled with this special application of Henry George's Land Values Tax is the demand for the confiscation of all lands to which the owners cannot show a "clean" title. Land acquired originally by purchase should, according to Highland Land League ideas, be honestly paid for at its present day value when ultimately taken over by the State, though Mr Lloyd George's Increment Tax should be carried to its logical development—the total confiscation of all future increments.

But mere titles of prescription, however ancient, should not be admitted, and all lands acquired, however long ago, by robbery and violence or as gifts to court favourites, should be acquired without any compensation whatever. We fear this drastic proposal differs in effect very little from Land Nationalisation without any compensation at all.

It is not our purpose in this book to play the arbiter between the different schools of Land Reformers. We rather desire to lay before the reader evidence of the LAND HUNGER which is the moving force behind them all, the evidence of those who feel that hunger themselves. Enough will appear to justify the insight of Cobden in

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proclaiming the land question a greater one even than that of Free Trade. The reader will discover for himself, perhaps, that each theoretic remedy answers, however imperfectly, to some felt want, some actual difficulty among the people. He will see those in whose way stand the difficulty and expenses of legal transfer; those who are seeking allotments under public ownership with co-operation in distribution and even in labour; he will meet, in the towns at least, with complaints about the unjust incidence of rates, and monstrous overcharges for land, he will even be able to trace some survival of the wish for Tariff Reform. One thing alone he will find almost universal—discontent. In the days when even Lord Lansdowne talks of peasant ownership, one thing, at least, is clear: throughout the length and breadth of the country our present land laws are condemned root and branch, and the people are demanding for themselves and for their children a readier access to the earth.

CHAPTER II

ENGLISH LETTERS—CRITICAL (I.)

WE shall endeavour in this chapter to give a picture of the LAND HUNGER as it affects various *classes* of the community, mainly in Central and Southern England. As man's need for land is a varied need, so the land hunger itself is varied, and is felt in various manners by countryman and townsman, by manufacturers, householders, and labourers. Starting from London, we deal first with Mr J. A. Randall, of Plough Lane, Wimbledon, a man at odds certainly with the land system as it is to-day. He is less severe, however, on landlords than on lawyers, and brings us face to face with the old demand for cheaper and easier methods of transferring land, either as freehold or under perpetual lease. With regard to the latter, we have only to say that Mr Randall appears to favour something very like the Scottish feuing system—about which his fellow Land Reformers

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across the Border are not so enthusiastic. He is, however, a man with a mission, and a thoroughly capable critic of the difficulties he has himself met. He is against all parties—Tory, Liberal, and Socialist—and apart from his practical schemes apparently conducts a "School of Help," where he teaches a sort of religious Anarchism. However, he has some shrewd things to say about the expense of law, and many strong instances of hardships brought about by the falling in of leases, which will be useful to those anxious to study the land question as a whole. Mr Randall contributes an interesting list of cases showing the hard working of our present land laws. He gives twenty-seven such cases "picked out at hap-hazard from a great many," and from his twenty-seven we take the following:

1. "An old man now, 28 years ago, rented a small cottage at 2s. 6d. per week near Merton tram terminus. By increments of 6d. his rent was raised to 8s. 6d. In 1908 the landlord intimated that a further 6d. would be added=9s. a week. The facts were published in the *Croyden Citizen*. The rent remains at 8s. 6d. to this date, September 1912."

Robbing the Leaseholder

2. "Seventy years ago a builder leased for 64 years a plot of ground at £5, 10s. od. on which, with his own gold, he erected two cottages. He died, and in a few years the beneficiary was compelled to replace all drains by order of the Borough Council. Subsequently, the freeholder's solicitor sent the executors a schedule of dilapidations to be repaired with new material before the expiration of the lease. The executors refused, but made good all necessary work to floors, walls, and roofs. The lawyers threatened an action, but the firmness of the executors decided them to forego it. 'The owners of the adjoining cottage,' however, says Mr Randall 'spent £30 in repairs, and under threat of legal proceedings, paid the lawyers £60 in cash.'"

3. "The owner purchased lease of house in main thoroughfare 25 years ago. To improve the property he made certain additions at the rear. The lawyers, under threat of legal process, obtained £5 from him for daring to infringe covenants of lease. In this case the freeholder contributed nothing towards the improvement of the land. The leaseholder's 'gold' and personal endeavour created all on the ground."

4. "Two men established a 'sport supplies' in the Strand. Their lease was subject to a rent of £80. Applying for a renewal they had to

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agree to the lawyer's terms, viz. :—£120 rent, to pull down the old buildings and re-erect at a cost of £12,000. The freeholder contributed nothing. The firm could not stand it."

5. "Thirty years ago a builder took up lease of land, upon which he erected several small shops, one being a corner. For this he obtained an 'off' license to sell beer, etc. A year or two later he sold it for £600. The purchaser subsequently bought the freehold of adjoining houses, and obtained consent of the Licensing Justices to utilise them for cellarage and storage purposes, and the license was endorsed accordingly. The freeholder of the corner shop puts it up to auction. Tenant is outbid by firm of brewers, who purchase at an extravagant sum. Tenant then obtains leave to carry on sale on adjoining premises. Lawyers at once set to work to prevent this. Litigation continues for a long time. Eventually the House of Lords records final judgment in favour of tenant. This case is proof that lawyers consider a tradesman's goodwill is part and parcel of the land upon which it has been established."

6. "The lessee of these premises offered them for sale in 1888 at £20 without finding a purchaser. Eventually a bootmaker purchased and repaired the premises. Within three years he

Dilapidations

disposed of it to a 'world's provider' who ignored the bootmaker's goodwill, yet gave £1,000 for possession. To-day the shop is RATED at £2,500. Thirty years ago the same land was rack rented at £26 per annum. The adjoining land sold at £5,000 per acre. In 1879 a shop adjoining public house was let to a widow as a coffee-house at 10s. a week. The value of it to-day equals that of the previous case. 1890 saw three shops in the same thoroughfare offered and refused at £40 per annum; to-day the same shops are rated at £250 to £300. The rating value is due to the energy and activity of personal endeavour, NOT the land."

7. "Three houses in North London purchased by owner who dies. His executor holds lease, three years unexpired. A year before expiration he receives schedule of dilapidations from lawyers. Houses in excellent repair, two let at £42, one at £40. Lawyers' estimate cost of renovation £170. After lengthy correspondence the executor hands them all documents with cheque value £80, agreeing that lawyers shall also collect and retain the last half-year's rent=£62, a total cash payment of £142. Some months after, the beneficiary under late owner's will informed executor that lawyers had worried for last half-year's ground rent, which,

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to avoid threatened legal proceedings, was paid by beneficiary without knowledge or consent of executor."

8. "The Metropolitan Railway Company are freeholders of business premises and cottages. They are leased at a ground rent to a city financier. He lets them at rentals far above their value. Tenant of business premises is astonished and astounded when Railway Company distrain upon his machinery value £1,500 for £56 due as ground rent to them by his landlord! He asks advice and finds that he has no redress against the Railway Company. Bailiff is in possession 14 days, when landlord pays the £56 plus costs over £100. Lawyers subsequently wrote tenant demanding 5s. per day costs of bailiff, the reason being that tenant had written asking them to hold their hands in selling his machinery. He threatened to have 20,000 hand-bills circulated setting out the facts."

This threat had the desired effect, though we do not quote further, as Mr Randall is not complimentary to the legal profession.

With these instances of Mr Randall's we may give two others, one illustrating the abuses of the landlord's power of distraint, the other the fraud to which land speculation readily

An Eviction

leads. Mr R. O. K. Beavan of Torquay writes :—

“I have read with interest your letter in the *Daily News*, and beg to lay before you a case typical of our infamous land laws. Mr and Mrs S—— of Torquay have occupied a house with stable yard attached and carried on the business of carriage proprietors for forty-two years, during which they have paid more than a £1,000 in rent, apart from taxes. During this period Mr S—— has carried out improvements on the property, paving stable yard and erecting sheds to the value of several hundred pounds.

“Last Monday he was sold up under distress for sum of £10, 12s. 6d., amount of rent owing by him, and with the goods sold went his horse and vehicle, his means of living. Also understand that said distress sale was illegal, as the full notice had not been allowed. The amount of rent was about ONE HUNDREDTH of the amount he has paid in rental during his tenancy. They are both people advanced in years. I went over the place yesterday, and found it to be a very cramped place. I understand no repairs such as papering rooms, repairs to roof, etc., have been carried out in twenty years.”

Mr J. C. Bowey, of 48 Broad Street, Stepney,

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gives the following illustration of the way in which, while land ripe for building is kept back from use, land not in demand is pressed upon people as a speculation.

Mr J. C. Bowey writes from Stepney :—

“ 19th June 1912.

“ I see in the *Chronicle* you ask people to tell their experiences in buying land, etc., and I should like to tell you that being on a holiday at the sea-side I was induced to buy 2 plots of land about ten years ago. The auctioneer gave a glowing picture of the value of the land, and the many benefits that would accrue to any who purchased this land, which he declared was ready for building on at once. He gave us whisky and fed us up and told us any trifle would do to bind the bargain. I thought it a good thing, and paid a little instalment, the auctioneer's man obligingly telling me that the smallest trifle would do. Soon the demand came in for the first quarter's payment with interest. I thought the interest was rather large—this is the first time I thought about the interest. The next quarter the sum I owed of course was smaller, but the interest was much larger. The next the sum was smaller and the interest was very much larger, in fact I thought it was intended to smother me and

Cost of Transfer

kill the bargain with their precious interest. I had £20 in the bank and paid them off, and got my papers stamped at Somerset House, but I have never heard anything about building or anything about it since from any one, and I can't help thinking these plots are sold and the money obtained, then all is allowed to rest till the purchasers are dead, or otherwise disposed of, when of course another deal can be made in the same way, all in the interest of what is called 'thrift.'"

The following letter illustrates another of the manifold difficulties preventing land from coming into the hands of those who can use it best :—

" 5 WESTCLIFF ROAD, MARGATE,

" June 21st 1912.

" DEAR SIR,—Replying to yours in yesterday's *Daily News*, I sold recently a piece of land for £520, costs (vendor's) of transfer £27, 19s. 11d.; also bought a site for £120, costs (purchaser's) £23. Of course I don't know what it cost the other party in either case. Is it not idiotic? Is there anything more calculated to put a stop to such transfers? Had I known, I certainly would not have either bought or sold.—Yours faithfully,

A. FAIRWEATHER."

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Leaving the cities and the difficulties of the householder and small business man, how does the land question appeal to the rural population? The complaints of the rural labourer are deep, though not loud—for he is the most silent member of the community—of bad housing, low wages, the virtual impossibility of gaining a holding of his own, except at a far higher rent than the farmer pays or even at any rent at all. Fluency is, however, gained in the town, and possibly it was Sheffield experience that enabled “Ex-Milkmaid” to compile for the *Sheffield Independent* the following excellent summary of the country problem as it appears to the labourer:—

“Sir,—I am pleased to notice that some of our Liberal members are taking note of the fact that by bettering the conditions of our rural workers they will get to the root cause of so much labour unrest. Only those who have actually experienced the struggle that an ordinary farm labourer and his wife have to make to appear anything like respectable can understand how very hard it is.

“There is no other trade—and here let me say the average farm labourer, as we call him, is as skilled a workman at his trade as the average man at other trades, and many a farmer owes

“All Work and No Play”

much of his success to the advice of his men—at which it is impossible for a workman, by working hard, to earn enough to bring up a family moderately comfortable on his own earnings. In most families at certain seasons of the year the wife and children go out into the fields to earn a little to help make ends meet, and as the average farm labourer's family is more numerous than most others, there is quite plenty for the mother to do at home without helping to earn the living outside. What wonder is it then that when the children are old enough they resolve they will find better conditions for themselves in the towns and lands far away. The drudgery and monotony, lack of educative and recreative opportunity, are too great for the young people of either sex who have any ambition at all. In the villages, and towns, too, of Lincolnshire the manservants and maidservants are engaged yearly and receive their wages yearly, and Bank Holidays—apart from Christmas Day and Good Friday—are unknown to them as holidays. They may get a day's holiday occasionally, but that is the exception rather than the rule.

“Another burning question in most rural districts is the shocking housing accommodation. Some of the people have to live in houses quite unfit for human habitation, but they must live

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somewhere, and there is nothing better to be got. Some time ago I went on a visit not far from John Wesley's old home. In the house was what was supposed to be two bedrooms. In the highest part of the one it was impossible for an average upgrown person to stand upright: the only light was from one glass tile let into the roof, and the bed had to be made on the floor. The only water for drinking purposes was to be had from a ditch which ran near by, and I, who had been accustomed to our good Sheffield water, felt parched for the want of a drink either of nice water or tea.

“Whilst so much is being said just now about the farmer and his labourers not being able to afford their contributions under the Insurance Act, it is up to us as a nation to see that they are enabled to do so, either by better wages, or land which they may cultivate for their own interests. Owing to exposure to wet and severe weather the agriculturalist is just as much in need of sickness benefits as other workmen.

“Country life has certain advantages over town life in so much as it is healthier, there is less rush and turmoil, and a purer food supply. If added to this we can get a more just remuneration for labour, leisure, and facilities for both bodily and mental recreation, there

Death Fines

will no longer be the need of the cry 'back to the land.' Yours, etc.,

EX-MILKMAID."

Mr Henry Cornish, of 89 Dalberg Road, Brixton, who informs us in the course of a long letter that he has "studied the land hunger question for forty years," inveighs against the copyhold leases.

"I am a copyholder," he says, "of eight cottages in the parish of Botesdale, county of Suffolk, my native village. Take one lot of a double dwelling. My father paid the death fine, my mother ditto ditto, and my eldest brother. Now I should, but cannot owing to losses I have made since I became the copyholder. The property will most likely go back into the Lord of the Manor's hands.

"This is only one example that could be multiplied by thousands in the course of a stated number of years."

Security of tenure, however, brings contentment, whether the person enjoying it be freeholder or leaseholder. This accounts, perhaps, for the Conservatism of the larger farmers as

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illustrated by the following letter from Mr John Harris, Norbury Farm, Worcester:—

“In answer to your letter in the *Evesham Journal* of June 22nd, and also to that of ‘Veritas,’ June 29th. I may say I have been tenant of this farm, and my father before me, for nearly sixty years, which fact speaks for itself. My landlord is the Marquis of Abergavenny, and therefore is, of course, a large landowner. And my experience, and so, no doubt, of most of the tenants on his estate, is that it is much more desirable to be a tenant under a great landlord, than to be a so-called owner through borrowed capital, either privately or advanced by the State, as some advocate for it to be made possible. Of course, if any one is lucky enough to have sufficient capital to buy their own farm right out, so much the better, but not to borrow money to do so.

“I should like to understand your quotation ‘of the land being still in bondage,’ because I take it that it must belong to some one, whoever occupies it. And God defend us from the State ever being landlords.

“As regards Small Holdings. These may be successfully worked by suitable persons, if they have more capital. But if this is to be raised by the State, who is to pay the piper, as already

A Contented Farmer

we are overburdened by rates and taxes? My opinion of the cause of land going out of cultivation is the low price of corn, and that it does not pay to cultivate only the best productive land. But there is very little land really that is not made use of, for if it is not growing corn, it is laid down to grass, and growing beef and mutton, etc. Of course, if it paid to grow corn, it would be much better, as it would find more labour for every one concerned. There are very few arbitrary ejections; for, as a rule, under a large landlord, a tenant, so long as he is able to pay his rent and farm the land in anything like proper order, is allowed to go on from father to son, as in my own case. I may say the present political unrest is causing many landowners to sell their estates, and therefore many tenants, old and new, will have to move. But who can blame the landlords? In regard to cottage accommodation: in quite rural districts off the track of the summer tripper, there are plenty which are, or might be made, comfortable at a very low rent, £3 to £5 per annum, including good garden. In more popular and fashionable parts they are difficult to get, and, of course, higher rented."

Before dealing with the rural labourer as he is, we shall quote one more letter to show the

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difficulties felt by one, who is evidently a sincere well-wisher to the people, and who is willing to do what he can to bring them "back to the land." Mr Herbert S. Stonehan, of 25 Old Kent Mansions, Kensington, writes :—

"I am deeply interested in getting people on to the land to such an extent that I am trying to place them there, and have invested a considerable amount of money to carry out my 'fad.' Two points strike me most here on the Chilterns :

" 1. How badly lands are farmed.

" 2. How considerate landlords are—I am not one of them.

"But there are other points :

" 1. How terribly hard it is for the farmer that the private banks have been swallowed by the shareholding concerns.

" 2. How very unfair it is that I, having built a house here, am assessed at three times the value of my neighbour who has only grown crops badly.

" 3. How silly it is that I should be taxed for employing labour, when my neighbour who employs less and tills worse is not taxed at all.

4. How foolish it is that I, who would build

Cramping Bye-laws

cottages if they could be made to pay, am hampered by all sorts of restrictions which should rightly apply to towns, and not to scattered villages. If I could build wattle and wood houses, they would pay—they have been water-tight for hundreds of years, as part of this house will show, but I must not. This is the cause of much of the scarcity of cottages.

- " 5. I tried hard to get water laid on here—the villagers opposed it, and I was beaten. They mostly live in their own cottages, and feared increased rates.
- " 6. The Government will do nothing for them. There is no telegraph or telephone office, as the G.P.O. says it wouldn't pay! There is no central market where they can sell their produce, be it cherries or pigs.
- " 7. There is one solution. A man must have hopes of ownership, and all owners must be rated on one basis.
- " 8. So long as a house is weather proof and healthy, cottages in country districts must be permitted.
- " 9. Land banks are an absolute necessity, and the press must be educated to this."

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We have dealt thus far chiefly with the difficulties of people who wish to buy or hire land; largely with men in a small way, it is true, but not with the proletariat. We have now, before closing this chapter, to consider the case of the labourer—the man of whom and for whom many things are said, but who speaks little for himself—the most silent of them that suffer. Yet if we may believe what his friends tell us, Hodge is not contented with his lot. He feels the pressure of low wages; he longs for greater independence, for a holding of his own in the land. Indeed, the Small Holdings Act, disappointingly slow as it has been, has sufficed to show that there is everywhere a keen desire for holdings. A recent correspondence in the *NATION* turned on the attitude of the rural labourer to politics and the land question, the following letter written by Mr J. T. Kingsley Tarpey, being singularly significant as to his feelings:—

“SIR,—Your correspondent, Mr Donald B. Somervell, protests against dragging the Enclosure Acts into the present land controversy. He maintains that they are dead and buried, and that the hardships they inflicted are

Robbery of the Commons

irrelevant to the question. I could show Mr Somervell districts within thirty miles of the heart of London where the sense of revolt against the injustice and tyranny of those Acts is as much alive to-day as it was two generations ago.

“Old men still tell of the days when they herded pigs for the cottagers in the vast ‘common woods’ that are now enclosed for game. The keepers have a very hard task in preserving these woods. In the very early morning, the ‘close time’ for keepers, a procession of women may be seen coming towards the village laden with great faggots of branches. The right to glean fallen wood has existed for centuries; it has given birth to an inherited instinct that is above the law. On these woodland heights every villager would maintain the principle against a dozen Acts of Parliament. If the keepers catch the women on the road, they confiscate the wood and set fire to it by the roadside. Public opinion does not blame the poor women for taking the wood; it blames the keepers for a wanton and cruel waste of good fuel.

“The land agitation that comes from the desire of the small holder to secure land on reasonable terms and on a firm tenure is one thing; but there is another, and a deeper,

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agitation in the villages among the landless poor. There is a tradition, handed down from father to son, and treasured as a religion, that once the poorest cottager had rights on the land; that he had grazing for his beasts, fuel for his hearth, fern for thatch or bedding, lime and marl for his garden; that the good wife had the unclaimed harvest of the woods and fields—blackberries, sloes, crab-apples, nuts, mushrooms—as well as cowslips for wine, and nettles for beer; that these rights were stolen from them by those that had already more than enough of land and what land can yield for man's use. The country people have never lost the belief that this was a mean and cruel theft. They have never quite lost the hope that the wrong may be righted. Land reform in these villages means *restoration of the common rights of the people* more than anything else. It means giving back to the village communities the ancient privileges that game-preserving has destroyed.

“Is it too late to call the Enclosure Acts in question? Then surely that is only because there must be a revision of landownership at once more thorough and more drastic. One by one we have seen rights that every one has taken for granted filched from the community or the public by the law. Mountain, lake, and

A Revival of Unionism

river are lost to us in turn. Even the very shores of our island may belong in strips to millionaires with foreign-sounding names. It is time, indeed, that the people should make new laws for the control and ownership of land. The law is a good servant, but it is a bad master, and I marvel at the patience of the English people when they see this monster, of their own creating, devouring one by one their most cherished possessions."

Hodge, however, has been, as we said before, patient and uncomplaining. Trade Unionism has been weak in the country districts—no agricultural labourers' programme has appeared for generations. While Ireland was aflame with the land war and Scotland was the scene of a fiery agitation, English Hodge said nothing—and got nothing either.

The rural labourers, however, are on the way to become more assertive. One of the most hopeful signs of the times is the revival of Agricultural Unionism in Norfolk and in Scotland. The two movements, in so far as we know, are in no way connected, and it is, perhaps, all the more significant that they are independent of one another. The same

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discontent has found similar expression in two widely separated parts of the island, and we may hope other intermediate districts and counties will follow suit.

The difficulties in the way of Agricultural Unionism are many. The people are scattered; the farmers can more readily exercise supervision and undue influence over them than the city employers of labour over their workmen, whose leisure time is entirely free. But these difficulties are not insuperable. Writing only last spring the authors of a pamphlet, *The Land Problem in Scotland*, Thomas Henderson, B.Sc., and Jos. F. Duncan, seem to have known nothing of any contemporary Agricultural Unionism in Scotland. Thus in formulating a rural worker's programme, they quote "the demands put forward by the Ploughmen's and Labourers' Union" (now, unhappily, defunct) "as a basis for their demands." Yet the same Mr Duncan, writing to the *Labour Leader* at the end of September, tells us that

"Six months ago the first effort was made at organisation. It was the effort of the farm servants themselves. Such aid as they have had from outside has been confined to half-

A Rural Workers' Programme

a-dozen persons, yet to-day there are forty branches of the Scottish Farm Servants' Union, with over 3,000 members, and two permanent organisers working night and day, opening new branches. The movement has been carried from Aberdeenshire north to Nairn and south to the Lothians, and within the next two months will have entered practically every county in Scotland."¹

The above-mentioned programme of the Scottish Ploughmen's and Labourers' Union may here be quoted as a statement of the demands likely to be put forward by the younger organisation as far as labour conditions are concerned :—

A working week of 56 hours.

The abolition of Sunday labour wherever practicable.

A weekly half-holiday.

Short periods of engagement.

Payment of wages weekly, and in cash.

¹ We cannot say how far his hope has been fulfilled. Those who know of Mr Duncan's energy and enthusiasm, however, will notice that this movement *began* in Aberdeenshire, and may suspect that his modesty conceals a very great personal share in giving "such aid as the labourers had from outside," and his hopefulness expects too much where that "aid" is not forthcoming.

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The abolition of hiring fairs.

Better housing conditions.

The new Union, however, is clearly already in advance of the old, for writing about a month before Mr Duncan's letter to the *Labour Leader* its President, Dr G. B. Clark, lays down the *political* programme of the Scottish Farm Servant's and Rural Worker's Union.

"We have now about twenty branches with 2,000 members in about half-a-dozen counties, and one or two new branches are being formed weekly. In the past the difficulty was to get the farm workers together at any centre, as they are so scattered, but now most of the young men are cyclists. At one of my meetings lately there were nearly a hundred bicycles at the entrance to the hall.

"The farm workers in the North also realise that while much may be attained by combination as a union, more may be got by political action. By this means they may get the Trade Boards Act of 1909 applied to them. The Board of Trade have the power and may extend the Act to farm workers if it considers them a sweated trade. You have all the conditions of a sweated trade as defined in the report of the House of

Mr George Edwards

Lords Committee; you have long hours, low wages, and the bad conditions described. The Act states that it can be extended to trades where the rate of wages is exceptionally low compared with other employments or circumstances exist that render the application to the trade expedient. If the Board of Trade refuses to apply the Trade Boards Act we can in Scotland ask for an amendment to the Small Holders Act, which came in force this year. By it the principle of the Crofters Act is extended to the whole of Scotland, and a land court is established to fix fair rents, and we can agitate for its extension to all holdings and to have a fair wage fixed as well as a fair rent. If it is desirable to prevent competition injuriously affecting farmers it is equally if not more necessary to prevent it injuring farm workers, and in fixing a fair rent wages must be considered, as rent is the surplus after allowing for the cost of production—that is, wages and material.

“I regret to say most of the Liberal Associations are hostile to the movement.”

The Southron, even when he begins earlier, moves slower than the Scot. Mr George Edwards, the energetic secretary of the Agricultural Labourers' Union in England, has

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been working several years at the difficult task of rebuilding the shattered fabric raised a generation ago by Joseph Arch. But his Union is already a power in Norfolk, politically and industrially, and though its progress may be slow and difficult, it seems unlikely that Agricultural Unionism will again fail in England. He, too, contributed his quota to the land discussion of last summer in the form of an interview in the *Labour Leader*.¹

“In Norfolk the wage of the agricultural worker is supposed to be 13s. a week, but frequently through loss of time due to bad weather it does not amount to 10s. During the harvest wages are higher, but they do not exceed £1 a week, and the harvest only lasts five or six weeks. The whole year round the average wage might be put at 13s. a week; the farmers themselves say it is 15s. 4d. a week, but facts do not bear out that estimate. The labourers depend on the harvest for the payment of the rent of their cottages for the whole year. If they lose the harvest they are homeless.”

¹ It is significant of the close touch between this new Labour movement in the country, and the old Unionism of the towns, that all our letters on the subject were communicated either to the *Labour Leader* or to *Forward*, the Scottish Labour paper.

A Labourers' Budget

"LABOURERS' BUDGET.

"Of course the cost of living is a good deal less than in towns,' I suggested.

"I have drawn up the following budget, and submitted it to the Government. It allows for a family of three children:—

	s.	d.
Three meals per day at 2d. per meal for adults	7	0
Three meals per day at 1½d. per meal for children	7	10½
Rent	2	0
Coal	1	7
Clothes	1	0
Labourer's club money		6
	<hr/>	
	19	11½

Even if we were to accept the farmers' estimate of 15s. 4d. per week as the average wage, this budget proves how miserably inadequate it is.'

"But surely the monetary wage does not represent the full payment given to the labourer. Is he not given something from the products of the farm?'

"In Norfolk and Suffolk there are no extras—no potatoes, no milk, no greens are thrown in,' answered Mr Edwards emphatically. 'The labourer has to buy everything. He may have a garden attached to his cottage in which he will grow vegetables, but all this means extra labour after a long and heavy day's work.'

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“THE WOMEN STARVE.

“‘How in the world does his family live, then?’

“‘In nine cases out of ten the women starve ; the first thing she thinks about is her children and husband. As a result of this chronic under-feeding we have a very large percentage of insanity among the women. I am on the Asylums Committee of the Norfolk County Council, and we have over 300 wives of the labouring classes under our care. I attribute this large number to the anxiety necessitated in making ends meet and to the poor food. When meat is eaten at all it is the worst kind supplied.

“‘Are conditions everywhere as bad as in Norfolk? What about Oxfordshire?’

“‘The ordinary weekly wage in Oxford is only 11s., and, including the harvests, the farmers estimate the average wage at 13s. I question that estimate just as I question the Norfolk estimate. I have personally come in contact with hundreds of men who only take home 7s. week in and week out. In Northamptonshire the conditions are for the most part the same, although near Northampton the wages are a little higher, owing to the fear the farmers have that the men will leave the land for better paid

Low Wages

employment in the town. In Kent wages vary from 2s. 6d. to 3s. per day, but the labourers suffer very much from loss of time. The higher wage is also swallowed up in excessive rents, with the result that the Kent labourer is no better off than the Norfolk labourer. Cottages with no gardens attached, cannot be obtained at less than 3s. 6d. or 4s. a week. In Bedfordshire labourers are in a better position owing to the prevalence of small farms and horticultural cultivation, although once again the extra wages are largely swallowed up by higher rents, and extensive unemployment during the winter months is also a consideration. As a general rule, very much better wages are paid on the small farms than on big farms.'"

CHAPTER III

ENGLISH LETTERS—CRITICAL (II.)

THE following letter gives instructive particulars of the conditions prevailing under a good landlord, and also under one who cared nothing for the welfare of the people under him. It will be seen that the landowners, good and bad together, between them succeeded in making the conditions of life for the people of W—— steadily worse and worse. The writer is perfectly right in thinking this particular case exceptional only in its details, while quite typical of the sort of thing that *must* happen under land monopoly in every part of the country. In this case, for obvious reasons, we have thought it best to suppress actual names, both of places and people.

“DEAR MRS UNWIN,—I was living at W——, some time ago, and seeing your letter in the papers, asking for information on land questions,

Tyranny of a "Good" Landlord

I think some details of the condition of things in that village might be useful. It is so near your own part of the world that you may know about it already, in which case I hope you will forgive my troubling you. W—— has always seemed to me a typical example of the tyranny of the 'good' landlord.

"Mr H——, who bought this estate about 20 years ago, is certainly a good landlord as far as his own employés are concerned (game-keepers, gardeners, etc.), providing them with excellent cottages and looking after them well in case of illness or any misfortune. He is also a generous subscriber to all village schemes, and anxious to promote morals in the village. I remember much local excitement being caused by his dismissal of a young gardener whose child had been born very few months after his marriage!!!

"When Mr H—— bought the place there was only a small amount of land attached to it, but he gradually bought up more and more land at every opportunity, near the house in order to make a park, and at a distance for game preserves. In two directions he put down a considerable quantity of cultivated ground in covert. I wish I knew the exact acreage. In order to make his park he tried to get the whole of the piece of land surrounded by four

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roads in the corner of which his house stood, and as he obtained the land pulled down all the houses on it, buying other houses for his own employés. In this way it became more and more difficult for anybody not in his employ to obtain houses, and the housing problem became more acute every year.

“There was a successful builder in a small way in the village, a good employer, who could have considerably increased his business, but for the difficulty of obtaining houses for his men, or ground on which to extend his own buildings. Over and over again he tried to buy land on which to build cottages himself, but in each case he was out-bid by Mr H——.

“One piece of ground running up into this square which he wanted for his park was utilised for a market-garden. It was not a large piece, but there were hot-houses built on it, and a considerable business was done in mushroom growing, etc., the tenant gardener doing well, and employing four or five men. This piece of land came into the market, was bought by Mr H——. The market-gardener was given notice, and the piece of ground converted into park; the gardener had to start again at a distance, and his four employés to seek work elsewhere.

“Thus all industry and enterprise in the village were completely dwarfed.

And of a Bad One

“The south side of the park was bordered by the village street, and he could not purchase the houses that were built on it, but he got possession of the land as near to them as possible, and built an enormously high wall to hide them from his own house and grounds, in some cases the wall coming within a few feet of the windows of the cottages, where the inhabitants had been accustomed to a pleasant look-out over fields. The wall was built just inside Mr H——’s property, so that he had authority over both sides, and the cottage dwellers had not even the consolation of using it for fruit, as nothing was allowed to be trained against it, or any nails driven into it.

“On the other side of the village there was an estate which had been for many years in Chancery, and on which all the houses were in very bad repair. This estate was bought by a rich South African business man, who, unlike Mr H——, cared nothing for the welfare even of his own people, was seldom in England, would not bother his head about anything, and by the neglect and cowardice of the local authority, was allowed to leave his houses in an insanitary and over-crowded condition.

“Thus the people, who were obliged, on the one hand, to make room for Mr H——, had no refuge but to herd into the miserable dwellings

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belonging to the other landlord, or to leave the district.

“I have often quoted W—— as an example of the tyranny of land monopoly, but the answer has generally been that, of course, it was quite an exceptional case! I hope your appeal will have the effect of proving that it is far from being an isolated example, and that the lamentable fact is that it is only typical of what has happened all over the country.”

With this instance may be placed another, where again we suppress the name of the village and its noble “owner.”

“In 1907 I was in a hamlet on the Yorkshire coast north of Whitby. It consists of a few very small cottages, occupied by the labourers employed on the farms. It is a purely agricultural district. I noticed that one cottage was in ruins, and was told that during the previous winter, a severe storm had destroyed it. The next year, and again in 1911, I visited it again, and observed that the cottage had not been rebuilt. On making enquiries, I learned that all the cottages and all the land for miles around belonged to a very wealthy nobleman, who was not in the least likely to take the trouble to rebuild a cottage only representing about £3 a

Expensive Allotments

year in rent. I also learned that before its destruction, the cottage had been occupied by a farm labourer and his family, who was obliged to leave the locality, although the farmer, who had employed him, had need of the service of many more men than could be engaged.

“The nobleman would not sell his land, and, therefore, no new cottages could be built.”

Another letter comes from Mr W. Morrell of Appleshaw.

“This is almost entirely an agricultural district, so that the land, generally speaking, is not so valuable as in many parts of the country. There are, however, anomalies glaring enough here, such as allotments being let at 6 pence per rod within a dozen yards of a field laid down as, I presume, not paying for cultivation. One man pays a shilling a rod for a small piece, and the three lots all belong to one man. Then at Thuxton, which is about two miles from Appleshaw, there is land let at approximately £5 per acre, which is rented of Winchester College at 12 shillings or thereabouts. . . . As Mr J. Ward, the Member for Stoke, spent his boyhood here, he has lately tried to purchase a small portion of land, but hitherto has failed even to get a price fixed, because the owner thinks that

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possibly ere long the land will be more valuable. It is at present out of cultivation, and, therefore, pays little, if anything, in rates. The parish is but a very small one, and nearly all the land is in the hands of two people, and I can assure you it is only those who are always in touch with the land question at first hand that can in any adequate measure realise the curse of the land monopoly."

Mr Morrell also makes some suggestion towards the amendment of the law which is interesting.

"My opinion as to a remedy," he says, "is this: failing complete nationalisation there should be, after a careful enquiry as to the potentialities of any given district, say 100,000 acres, that there should be in that amount of land a stated acreage of every kind of produce that the said land is best adapted to, with a fair latitude allowed for varying seasons, but always controlled by the principle of what is best for the community, and not simply for the individual."

This is, we fear, an impracticable attempt to effect a compromise between individual ownership and State organisation of agriculture. However, at present, we are not dealing with

English Letters—Critical (II.)

the constructive, but the critical side of the question.

Here, then, are two or three excellent letters from people in humble circumstances, typical of thousands of others who have actually experienced the land hunger. The first is Mr James Tiplady, who writes from the Mechanics Institute at Derby.

“Yorkshire has been referred to as the county of broad acres. I have seen it stated in a well-known local newspaper that in Yorkshire alone there are three million acres. Think of it! Three millions of acres in one county alone! In the above county I was born 69 years ago. I am a Yorkshireman by birth; I am one by intelligent preference. I am the owner of just one plot; it measures 6 feet by 4. It is my lamented father’s and mother’s grave. I am a total abstainer, a non-smoker, have been a hard worker, having reared three sons and six daughters. I am in need of the country’s pension, which I think should be earlier. Loose the land and no old age pension would be needed. I am a land Arab. Had I had the chance I could have provided my own pension. Land provides livings. I and hundreds more are debarred from a living upon the land; it is not ours. Those

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who own it make poor use of it. In a walk of seven miles in June 1912 I saw four people! Land! land! land! and no one to work it! The English land system is the curse of the community; it will remain so until Free Trade is applied to it. I live in a house badly built, cold and comfortless. The rent is 26s. per calendar month, with no garden. To the Corporation of Derby I pay at the rate of £7 per acre for an allotment. Other land let by the same authority is let at £12 per acre for the same purpose. A letter was shown me, 'Look here; I have been paying £15 per annum to the Corporation of Bradford. They are going to rise it to £20. Raising the rent to an old tenant. Think of it! The real value is about £3 per acre.'

"Unemployment, immorality, drunkenness, everything we deplore, is caused by land hunger. The land of the country is the people's birth-right. I often wonder if those who lock it up—it is locked up from the people—ever read those striking passages of scripture as can be found throughout the Bible, notably—Leviticus, chap. xxv. verses 9 to 13, 23, 27, 30. A few weeks ago a starving man got 7 days' hard labour for daring to go on to a noble lord's preserves to get two or three ferns. He had walked four miles out to do it—the lot would be worth

Difficulties of the Labourer

sixpence or eightpence. I think he had earned all he got. Think of it! Seven days' hard labour. Thanks for your efforts. May you succeed."

Mr William Beavon, of Hereford, gives us the following clear statement of the difficulties that have beset his way. His is a truly formidable statement of the practical difficulties in the way of the poor labourer in the fine county of Hereford.

"I see by this week's *Hereford Journal* that you are inviting the experience of the workers in the County to give you some information on the Land Hunger which now exists. I was born and brought up in the County of Hereford, and there is not anything in the shape of farm work that I cannot do, in fact, I am a good all round man. But I am sorry to say, such men (owing very largely to casual labour and low wages) are being squeezed out. So, seeing there was not very much hope for me in the Country, I came into the Town, and went to work at a Brewery for several years, and finally took a Public House which was tied to a Brewery. Here also I found there was not much hope for me to get on and get a living. So I decided to go into the country again, and try my luck once more. I had the chance of a House and

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Garden and about three acres of orchard land, five miles from Hereford; and this I took at a rental of £22 per year, with rates and taxes another £2, which meant £8 an acre. Now the village where this House was situated was called Weston Beggard, and consisted of 4 large farms and a few small places, with no land (or very little) attached. Three of these farms were rented by one man (who also had a large Farm in the next village adjoining) so it really meant that you had to work for this one farmer or starve. Now, being of rather an independent nature, and a Radical into the bargain, you can guess I did not have a very pleasant time, and my nature often revolted at some of the work which I was compelled to do to get a living. Here are a few specimens (please understand, being a free man, and not *living under the farmer*, my work was often piece-work)—Mowing thistles, *sixpence* an acre. I did 75 acres, which took me a month, that means £1, 17s. 6d., or in round figures, nine shillings a week. Trimming Hedges, both sides, and cleaning out Ditch, one shilling and three pence for 100 yards (you can't do many 100 yards a day). Pulling, topping, and butting swedes three half-pence for 100 yards. It took me fourteen days to earn 10s. Cutting up and tying faggots, 3s. for 100. I had to work hard to tie

Low Wages

50 a day which meant at night you had earned the large sum of 1s. 6d. Then I took some Hop work to do in the Hop fields. I had to make four hundred holes with an iron bar, and pitch 400 poles for the Hops to grow up. For this I had the princely sum of 1s. 6d. for 400. Well, you went home tired at night after you had done 400. Then the wife, to help a little, she also had to go out to work, and this is the sort of work you get under a farmer if you are free (or tied—that is live in a cottage under him). Hop-tying and weeding the roots, 2,000 poles to the acre; you have to go over these 3 times and tie about 7 ties to each pole for six shillings an acre. It took her a month to earn 6s. The farmer does not give you any more when he has a good year, such as last year, 1911, when he gets £9 a hundred weight and he rejoices in Free Trade; or when he has a bad year and he sells his hops for £4 cwt., and he clamours for Protection. Can you wonder at the young men crowding into the Towns or emigrating to Canada? Well, sir, after seven years of struggling, I gave it up as a bad job after losing about £120, which I had to spend during the seven winters I was there, thro' being out of work? We hear people say 'there's plenty of work in the country.' So there is, but the farmers won't give you any

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thing for it. They get a few casuals off the roads to do their work in the summer and allow them to sleep in their Barns at night, a practice which ought to be prohibited by law. So here I am once more back in the Town, working as a Brewer's Drayman at the princely sum of 15s. a week (minimum wage), whereas if I could have had about 40 acres of land added on to my little house in the country at £1 an acre, I could have stayed in the country, got a good living for my wife and family, and been happy. The farm, 200 acres, adjoining my house was let at 20s. an acre, with the result that it was only half cultivated.

“The Small Holdings Act that we hear so much about is but of very little good to the poor man in the country, for this reason a County Council takes a farm (as a rule one that is very poor ground and a practical farmer won't look at). They cut it up, build a House or two on it, and then let it to the small holder. But of course he has to pay this extra cost of building in his rent, which means £4 or £5 an acre, where previously this said farm was let at £1 an acre. The small holdings to be of any use to the workers, must be let at a reasonable rent, the same as a farmer can take his farm of 200 or 300 acres. He gets it at 18s. or 20s. an acre with the House and buildings

Land Hunger on the Borders

thrown in. If our County Councils would take a farm (one that is of some good), cut it up fairly, say into 40 or 50 acre plots, and attach it to the small houses that already exist in a village, this really would be the salvation of our village population in many instances."

Passing from the apple-growing county of Herefordshire to the far north, near the Borders, we go to a district where, one would think, the power of the landlord was least, and the freedom of the people greatest. Here agricultural wages are, perhaps, higher than anywhere else, the proximity of the great coalfields rendering it easy for the rural labourer to escape from the inquisitorial rule of squire and farmer to the laborious, but relatively free condition of the miners. Here, however, as elsewhere, men are loath to leave the villages in which they have been brought up; here, too, they desire readier access to the soil; and here also it is necessary to suppress, as will be seen, the name and actual dwelling-place of the writer.

"I read with great interest your letter on the LAND HUNGER in the *Daily News and Leader* on June 30, and I can endorse every

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word you write on the land question. I wish you every success in your effort to write a book on our iniquitous land system. I am certain you will soon get matter to make quite a large volume of interesting reading. We know that the pen is mightier than the sword, so I sincerely hope your book will tend to arouse the people so that they may agitate till they get a sweeping reform in the land laws of this country. As an example of the great influence of books we only require to look back to the good work 'Uncle Tom's Cabin' did in freeing the slaves of the United States. So I hope your book will have the effect of liberating the people of England from the land tyranny. I cannot understand why the people have submitted so long to the land monopoly.

"Well, I will do my best to let you know the condition we live in under the land system in the North. This is the land of big estates, large farms, and landless men. Here the land monopoly reigns supreme. It has depopulated the country and driven people off the land to swell the ranks of the unemployed in the towns. We live in one of the most beautiful districts in England. With the pure air from the Cheviot Hills, and land of the best quality, we have surely an ideal country for Small Holdings and allotments. Alas! The Small Holdings Act is

Game, not Butter, Wanted

a dead letter here. The County Council being mostly composed of land owners it does not encourage Small Holdings. Within recent years a large area of land has been laid down to grass, thus lessening employment. With so much pasture land we could produce as good butter as Denmark, but the land system blocks the way. Game, not butter, is what the landlord wants, and so dairying is not encouraged. Houses which might have been inhabited have been turned into shooting boxes, to be used perhaps two or three times in the year for the sportsmen's lunch. Two or three years ago four old women in a neighbouring village who had lived there all their lives, got notice to quit, as their houses were to be pulled down. One of them died of a broken heart, and the others had to go to a town and start life in strange surroundings. The case was reported in *Reynold's* about three years ago.

“When the land is all owned by one man there is certain to be tyranny and there is no real liberty. I could tell you how I have suffered by the land tyranny, if you would not mention the names of the places. I have lived here all my life and my forefathers for generations. I have a small holding of ten acres, and pay a rent of 50s. per acre, farmers paying about half the rent for land quite as good. About

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thirty years ago I started planting fruit trees. I have had to wait a long time before they produced anything, but now I am getting some reward for my labours. Last year I had a fine crop, the apples being as good quality as any produced in the Colonies. I am perfectly convinced that if land could be bought at a reasonable rate, we could supply our population with home-grown fruit and give employment to thousands of people.

“It would take me a long time to tell you all the evils of our land system. Nobody but those who live in country districts can realise what conditions prevail. Houses without any drainage, some of them unspouted and without any sanitation, and nobody dares interfere. We once had a Parish Council, but it seems to have died a natural death. We pay our Clerk £5 a year and he never calls a meeting now, so he is pocketing £5 of the rate-payers' money for doing nothing. As for sanitary Inspectors they dare not look at our village. The District Council pays our inspector about £70 or £80 annually, but it is not his interest to interfere with any of the landlords, who might lose him his job. The land owners are the greatest law-breakers in the country.

“If we had Free Trade in land, many industries might be started in the country, and having

“Where Men Decay”

a larger population more money would be circulated and everybody would benefit. Many who are now suffering from the LAND HUNGER would then be able to start business on their own account. We should then have a free peasantry, each one living ‘under his own vine and fig-tree, none daring to make them afraid.’ No one who has the good of his country at heart but is alarmed by the depopulation of our rural districts. As a country one of our greatest assets are ‘our bold peasantry, our countries pride, when once destroyed can never be supplied.’ In 1881 the population of this Rural District was 10,869; in 1891, the population had decreased to 10,156; in 1901 to 8770, and in 1911 to 8579, or a decrease of 2290, or 21 per cent. in 30 years. The population has either emigrated to the Colonies or been forced into the towns. Under the land monopoly our villages are depopulated. C— was once a rather important village, and all the inhabitants were fairly prosperous. Within thirty years, twenty-five houses have been pulled down, and only three been built in their places. There are at present only eighteen houses, practically all owned by one proprietor. Houses cannot be had in the district, and any one wishing to get married has to leave the district. The landlord will not sell a square foot of land. If sites of

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cottages were available many working men would build themselves a house. We would have many visitors in summer if they could get accommodated, as it is such a healthy district, but visitors are not wanted here—game is of more consequence to the landlord.

“I hope I am not too late in sending these remarks on our land system. I could tell you how I have been treated for simply doing my duty as a school manager. I hope you will suppress the names of people and places as I might lose my house and land. Since I began my letter our cause has made great progress. People are beginning to think for themselves. Mr Lloyd George has thrown down the gauntlet, and we have every confidence he will lead us to victory. The country is ripe for action, and if working men will arouse and resolve that the Land Monopoly must be broken up, then we will have Free Trade in land.”

Another writer from industrial Lancashire has also to ask us to suppress his name—“I do not want my name in print, or I shall never get any land, or my children” he tells us—writes two letters. The first runs as follows:—

“In answer to your letter in the ‘Post Bag,’ Blackburn *Telegraph*, I have served four and a

Neglected Opportunities

half years' apprenticeship as amateur gardener, and have wanted upwards of 30 years one acre of land, either my own or secured for at least 20 years, and am wanting yet. Farmers round here are letting roadside land in narrow stripes at £10 to £20 per acre, and after paying half their rates they expect you to help them to make hay for nothing. Anything like this in your part? There has been an estate sold here some twelve months since, and the farms were sold as per below, and on the main road from here to Scotland, with trains running the whole length of the land: 73 acres £2,359, 43 acres £2,250, 84 acres £4,700. Less than five minutes walk to train, 37 acres £1,500, 59 acres £2,750, all in the borough, and the Corporation bought none! Can you beat this? Some fifty years since the Town Hall was built, cost £26,000, now they are building a bit of wing to it to cost £40,000 to £50,000. You don't need me to tell you what it will cost when extras come in. The cemetery wants enlarging, and it is in the middle of the 84 acres lot. Two farms at the back of this 84 acres belong to the Corporation. The farmer wants to be quit of about 10 acres, but the officials would not let it go for Small Holdings. It should have been for an asylum. A pity it wasn't, and the whole of the Corporation officials put in! Some time since I asked a man

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who had bought one acre from one that owns a farm he *wanted to sell*, how much he would take. He wanted £150; he had given £50. I then asked the farmer, and *he* wanted £150. The farmer did not give thirty pounds. Should these be rated, or should we still pay their rates? I have asked another, and he will not let, only for building land. Scores besides myself wanting land, I may say hundreds, and cannot get it. There is a case close to me where about ten or twelve got their notices to move off their hen runs. Two of them gave over £20 for stock about six months since. They cannot get another piece of land—result the stock and rails, etc., are not worth £5—a big loss for a man at 18s. a week. Another has built a new greenhouse 40 ft. × 12 ft. He had only got his plants in a couple of weeks since. You will have some idea what that costs, and no compensation. And scores of cases the same all over the borough. I could go on telling you for a week, but am sick. . . .”

“I have received acknowledgment of letter, and I would like to bring to your notice a case that is now going on, where men are losing a heap of money through having to sell off. There are men who have scraped up their spending money to buy hen runs and to build greenhouses,

Land going "back to Rushes"

and have had to clear off for building purposes with a few days' notice. A lot of them had growing crops, their stuff being in grand order, and, of course, no compensation. 'A hard case' you say, but harder still when I tell you that this is on the next land to the land the Corporation officials should have bought, *i.e.* the 84 acres farm now keeping about six persons only, and the farmer will not let these men have a piece even at £10 per acre. I mean, of course, small lots at a $\frac{1}{2}$ d. per yard, and only pasture land for which the farmers would not pay, if there was no meadow land, above five shillings per acre, and land next door to them being allowed to go back to rushes. Within a radius of one mile on one side there are 1,000 acres going back to moor land. We want bigger, sturdier men and women, and through this they are driven more into the centre of the borough to drink, prostitution and weaklings, rickets, children that will curse their parents for bringing them into the world later on, to say nothing about cost. They, poor children, are not to blame; it is the order we live under. If the framer of the Small Holdings Act had forced his bill the same as the Right Honourable Lloyd George, there would have been better doing years since. I have seen men with growing crops moved off. The only notice they got was

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when labourers came and pulled down their rails and began to cut foundations for builders. This is not in one case, but in scores, and as you will understand they, the builders, start when the hens or crop, as the case may be, is just at its best. There is in this borough fully one thousand hen keepers and amateur gardeners, who would if they could get the land and feel secure. But there has been that many dirty tricks done by them, that they have lost all faith. It is over twenty years since I heard the Grand Old Man say that this Land Act was long overdue, and it seems to me that I, being sixty, will not see it in force, only for the middle class. I may tell you they are the only ones on the land here, and when you hear them say they want an acre for a play ground for two boys, and offer to pay as much as 12s. per week, and when I tell you that the Corporation was to draw sixpence each house per week for collecting rents, 26 houses, thirteen shillings, what will you say? All on one piece of land. It gives me pleasure to tell you. I get the chance to tell my mind."

Though Mr Joshua Hughes of Oswestry closes his letter with a constructive proposal, what he writes is up to that point so purely critical, that we close our list of critical English letters with his.

Another Eviction

“Your appeal for information upon the question of land, housing evictions, and other things in this day's *Daily News and Leader* is of great importance. The following may be too old for your purpose. I know it is too true. Be as it may, it is at your service, my name and all. In the spring of 1863 my father (I remember it very well, for I was 10 years of age then) my father and his family, mother and two sons, lived next door to and under a woman publican.

“The public house was a small one, and there was a new railway being made, and extensive draining of land in that neighbourhood at that time; and to accommodate the overflow of customers my parents were requested to have these fellows in our house to drink, but they, my parents I mean, declined. They were very sober, hardworking people. My father always suffered from deficient eyesight, yet he did at that time, and had done years before and after, walked to his work on the farm, 3 miles a day and 3 back, and wished their two sons to be like them in respect of working. We followed in their steps, my brother being a Superintendent in a Sunday School at 19 years of age, now dead 32 years. We, my mother and I, walked many miles in search of a cottage as we had notice to quit, but failed to find one. After some few months without any other warning, the few sticks of

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furniture, but our *all*, in November, one wet day, were put out on the roadside. The only shelter for us was that of a friendly granary offered by a local farmer, for 1s. 6d. per week. It was a good granary, with a fireplace in it, but it was a granary and not a house. There we lived for eighteen months until a cottage became vacant by death; in the meantime my father's walk was lengthened one mile a day, and he was not a strong man at all. As a proof that my parents were respectable people I can give you proof to their latest years. As to myself, I am principally self-taught, and am compulsory retired from the post office, as a rural postman on account of ill-health, have served in it more than 35 years, and having been awarded a congratulatory letter from the Postmaster-General thanking me for my service to the State and also the Imperial Long Service Medal.

“I wish you joy abundantly, because I know you will experience sadness in your task. I have studied as best I could for forty years the cause and the remedy for my classes' grievances and felt them, lived them, and that remedy is, and it is the only real one, The Single Tax.”

CHAPTER IV

THE LAND QUESTION IN SCOTLAND

(I) THE HIGHLANDS

THE story of the Highland clearances is one of the most shameful in British history, and has led to one of the most vigorous Land Reform movements of the day. The Pentland Act, emasculated as it is, will probably do much to relieve the LAND HUNGER of the Highlands, but something more even than the Pentland Act will be needed before the old population of the Highlands is restored to its glens.

The LAND HUNGER in the Highlands pays very little heed to the theories of reformers elsewhere; as in rural England, the taxation of land values would probably meet with strong opposition. And not without reason. Probably under a system that taxed land values at all heavily the historic evils of which Highlanders complain would be actually more intense. We need not suppose that the Highland landlords cleared the clansmen

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off their estates in such a wholesale manner merely for the love of mischief. The fact is probably that sheep-farming came to pay better than small culture and the large sheep-farmer was willing to pay more rent for the land than the crofter could afford. On any other view of the case, the Highland clearances would appear as a record of mere senseless cruelty.

It is needless to go over the sad story of landlordism in the Highlands: it is enough to quote some of the evidence given before the Crofter Commission as cited in Mr Alexander Mackenzie's book on the Isle of Skye. In this we read, among many more things of like nature:—

“Malcolm Mackay, Struan Beg, stated that Dr MacLean, Talisker, cleared the townships of Fiscavaig and Ardhoil of 12 families. Hugh MacCaskill, succeeded Dr MacLean, and he evicted 16 families from Aird, Bhreac, and Heilla. ‘When Dr MacLean found a crofter's sheep on his farm, and the owner was not prepared to pay half a crown on the spot for it, he would have the ears of the sheep cut off close to the skull.’ In reply to Mr Fraser-Mackintosh the witness continued: ‘Dr MacLean was not long in possession before he began to remove the people. MacCaskill had the place a year or two when he commenced the clearances. The

Ruthless Clearances

people were warned to remove. They were so ignorant at that time that they would remove for anything. . . . I am not aware that any of the people were in arrear, but MacLeod of MacLeod was due some of them money for making roads.'

"Of this MacCaskill a namesake of his said: 'I have learned from older men than myself that the clearances commenced about 70 years ago. MacCaskill had only Rhuduman in his possession at that time, and Glenbrittle was occupied by crofters in comfortable circumstances; he cleared it, and made a sheep run of it. The church is in ruins, and the manse is converted into a shepherd's house. The clearances were made on the one side by MacLean and by MacCaskill on the other. About a dozen families all in comfortable circumstances were removed from Tusdale. . . . There used to be 16 families in Crickeruish; there is nobody there now but a shepherd. From other townships about 47 families were removed. Hugh MacCaskill was barely settled when he began the same operation as MacLean. The big township of Ferrinlea, which was occupied by 30 families, was cleared 50 years ago. A township in Minginish, with 12 families, was cleared, and the people scattered throughout the world. The MacLeod family began the clearances

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and MacCaskill finished them. There was another township near Carbost Beg, in which there were four families who were very well off. The daughter of a widow told me that her father had given Hugh MacCaskill £180 to help him when he came to Talisker, but when the place was cleared he removed her mother along with the others. This woman saw her father's corn shoved into the river when the place was cleared to make a distillery.' The chairman—'Is that the whole list of clearances you have to mention?' 'No; I may say that what the Assyrians left undone the Babylonians finished. I refer to the present tacksman as the Babylonian. Those whom I named before are dead; I want now to speak of the living. I begin with Mr Cameron, the present tacksman of Talisker. He got the tack 33 years ago, and when he came he made up his mind that there should be nobody else on the place at all. MacCaskill had left a remnant of the people for his own convenience, but when Mr Cameron came to Talisker, he would have nothing to do with any of the people, and, as I have understood, he began to litigate with the landlord, holding out that their being allowed on the tack was not mentioned in the lease. He would give us nothing, and would have nothing to do with us. It then came about that he

Forced Labour

would have to take the tack as he got it or leave it. He deprived the cottars of the grazing which they had for 20 years. They could not get any. He also took from us our peat moss, and gave us a bog which neither man nor beast had used up to the time he measured it out to us by the yard. . . . Then he removed ten cottar families which had been left by MacCaskill at Tosten-an-Fhirich, and ten or eleven from Fiscavaig, and put them in Ferrinlea, dividing the existing holdings. For this we were obliged to work for the tacksman of Talisker, whenever he required us. The strongest man, though he were as strong as Samson, only got 1s. a day, and the women 6d. We had to walk nine or ten miles to attend to his work."

All this, however, is only part of the story familiar all over Scotland, but too little known in England of the Highland clearances. Of these we get a general view in the vigorous letter contributed by Mr J. G. Mackay of Portree. The resistance of the men and women—for women played a great part in the matter—of Skye, to the encroachments of landlordism, is a glorious chapter in modern Scottish history. The traditions of Skye are strong in Mr Mackay,

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who rose from a sick bed at the last General Election to tell over in vigorous Gaelic to his fellow Highlanders the wrongs done to themselves and their ancestors. He has himself suffered much for the cause, and we gather from his letter not only the thought, but the feeling of the Highlands and Islands.

“THE CASE OF THE HIGHLAND CROFTERS

“There is no more melancholy incident in the history of our country than the dispersion of the clansman of the Highlands, and the ruin of the finest peasantry that any country could produce.

“One would think that a peasantry, a few thousand of whom, undisciplined and ill-armed, went very nigh to over-turn the government of the British Empire, and replace the rightful heir on to the throne of his fathers, would be worth some consideration as an asset of value to the country. But no, the treatment meted out to the unfortunate Highlanders after their defeat, footsore and hungry at Culloden, is worthy of the blackest chapter in the history of the unspeakable Turk. Cumberland, who for the first time got his enemy in his power, gave his troopers unlimited licence to murder and

The Tragedy of the Highlands

pillage. The country was raided north and south, no respect being shown to friend or foe. All were treated alike. It was enough that a man could not express himself in English to bring upon him the vengeance of the soldiery, who were thirsting to wipe out the disgrace of their former defeats. Thousands were sold as slaves to the American plantations; many more fled their native land, and took up their abode in foreign lands. The estates of the chiefs who took part in the rebellion were confiscated to the Crown, some were sold, but the greater part were restored after a time, upon condition of the chief raising his clansmen as soldiers for the wars then going on in different parts of the world.

“Young men out of loyalty to their chiefs, and in order to redeem the clan territory, came forward with readiness till nearly twenty-five thousand Highlanders assumed the red coat, and conquered for an ungrateful country in all parts of the world. The chiefs who, previous to the Rebellion, were merely chiefs or leaders of the people, now found themselves installed as owners of the territory of the clan, which was formerly held on the tribal or communal system. The relationship with their clansmen immediately changed. Formerly the wealth of a chief consisted of the number of his clansmen,

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in the brawny arms and good claymores which maintained for him his broad acres. In order to have the necessary influence over his people, a chief had to be very careful in his treatment of them, and it required much kindness and condescension on his part to do so; for, unless he had a contented and loyal people, his own position would be anything but comfortable. There was little disturbance, however, during the lifetime of the generation who lived under the old order of things, the happy relationship between chief and people was not much interfered with, but the next generation awoke to a ruder order of things.

“The new generation of chiefs mixed in Southern Society, became extravagant beyond the income from their impoverished estates. Every effort was made to increase their rent rolls, but with no great prospect. Agriculture was neglected in the old days, the grazing of herds of the native Highland cattle on the hills, and a few sheep to meet their own requirements, with such cultivation as could be done with the *cas chrom*, or crooked spade, or the primitive plough, was all that was attempted. More pains were taken to have the people trained in the use of the broadsword than to teach them how to make two blades of grass grow where one grew before. Trade in the country there was none; so that

Sheep Breeders, Land Speculators

it was with welcome and greedy eyes the needy chiefs saw the invasion of their country by a horde of sheep breeders and land speculators from the Borders, before whose offers of large increase of rents any sentimental love they might have had for their people vanished like the snow on their native hills before a summer sun.

“No thought was wasted as to whether the clansman, whom they had formerly been at such pains to train in the arts of war, could be trained in the more peaceful and profitable arts of agriculture and sheep-farming.

“They did not pause for a moment to make any such calculation, enough for them that they required the money to meet their ever-increasing expenditure. As an apology for the course which was being pursued, the people were represented as incurably indolent and beyond the hope of amelioration, and nothing better could be devised in their interest than to rout them out and eject them to starve, sink in the slums of the cities, or sell the reversion of their labour for a passage to America. It is almost impossible at this time of day even for a native Highlander to realise the terrible ordeal through which the Highland people of those days were made to pass. Hardly had they recovered from the terrors of Cumberland and his dragoons than they had to

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face calamities if possible even more terrible, more cruel, because at the hands of those from whom they naturally looked for protection and sympathy. The clearing of the glens first began in these districts nearest the Lowlands, in Argyll and Perthshires, but the work of destruction spread with amazing rapidity, from the braes of Mar and Athol to the clansmen of Lochiel and Glengarry, northwards through the wilds of Ross-shire, till it culminated in the conflagration of Kildonan and Strathmore in Sutherlandshire, till actually some of the ships bearing the expatriated clansmen were wrecked on the coast through the fog caused by the burning of their own habitations.

“Shipload after shipload were sent to America. Many of the people died on the voyage, the ships were frequently old rotten hulks, with no accommodation or conveniences for so many passengers. Cholera broke out and cut off the miserable emigrants in hundreds. The survivors were dumped on the shores of Canada, without any provision or arrangement being made for them. Many more perished in the snow before they made a settlement.

“Many of those who were too poor or infirm to go to America drifted into the large towns, where, from their want of English and knowledge of city life, they soon sank into a condition of

The Crofter's Act

most abject poverty. Others who were allowed to remain in the country were huddled into existing townships on the sea-shore, where accommodation was made for them by subdividing existing holdings. The existing tenants, getting no reduction of rent were soon brought to as great a state of poverty as the intruders.

“Things went on in this way, drifting from bad to worse, till in the year 1872, through the influence of a newspaper, *The Highlander*, started in Inverness by the late John Murdoch, young Highlanders in the south were roused to do battle for their oppressed countrymen at home. Very soon the ‘heather was on fire,’ and a spirited agitation set on foot. When fortunately the franchise was extended in the year 1885, the Highland crofters for the first time were able to let their voices be heard in Parliament, with so salutary a result that the Crofters’ Act was passed in the early days of 1886.

“This Act gave fixity of tenure, and appointed a Land Court to fix fair rents and cancel arrears which accumulated on the iniquitous rents. The result of this was that the crofters’ rents were reduced an average of 40 per cent. and arrears cancelled to the value of 60 per cent.

“This act was the greatest blessing ever conferred on the Highlands, if it did not give contentment it at least gave peace, and the people

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immediately rose to the occasion, so much so that a person who knew them before the passing of the Crofters' Act in 1886, would hardly credit that they were either the same people or the same country.

"The Act of '86, however, fell short, in that it did not give sufficiently drastic powers to enlarge holdings and form new ones, so the agitation was still carried on, but now not with the same excitement. It was more a battle of leaders. The Liberal Party had taken up the Land Question, and the Highland Land League was merged into the Scottish Liberal Association, from whose platforms the demands of the people were being made with steadfast persistence by the Highland leaders. The voice, feeble at first, was gradually getting stronger and stronger, till at last there was not a more popular or spirited discussion at the Scottish meetings than the Land Question.

"The infection caught on, and from being a Highland question it soon became a Scottish one. Year by year the voice was growing stronger and stronger, till in the year 1906 Lord Pentland brought forward his Bill to be ignominiously thrown out by the Lords. Election after election, Scotland stood true to her demand, and at last, in 1911, the Pentland Bill, though considerably modified, became law. The Land

Demand for Land

Court is overwhelmed with applications from the Highlands, and when the people in the Lowlands realise the benefits and powers that are put into their hands, there will be similar pressure from them. Even the Pentland Bill is but an instalment of what must be done to free the land of this country and put it to the best use for the good of the country at large. But as the wren said, when she was drinking from the loch, 'Little by little.'

"There has been no great movement for reform without its martyrs. Many of the Highland crofters suffered for the cause imprisonment and persecution, and their friends suffered in many ways on their account. Social relations in the country were very much strained and there were no end of gloomy forebodings as to the disastrous effect on the country of such an ebullition of lawlessness, but what is the result? Even the Landlord party will admit, that now, after all that has come and gone, relations are more friendly than they have been at any time since the breaking up of the clan system, and even the leaders of the Highland movement are recognised as good citizens."

And here is another letter from one who took part in the stormy history of the Highland

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land agitation. Mr John Sutherland of Buldoo, Latheron, Caithness, writes as follows on

“THE LAND QUESTION IN THE HIGHLANDS

“Notwithstanding our advanced civilisation, and great achievements in science and philosophy; the Land System in Great Britain is the worst in the world.

“In the United Kingdom land is in fewer hands than in any other country. For example, about seventy men own one half of Scotland, and 13,000 men own two-thirds of the whole Kingdom.

“Be it said to our shame that during the Victorian reign 1,225,000 persons died of starvation, and no less than 3,668,000 persons were *evicted* from their land by landlords.

“From 1870 down to 1890, 1,000,000 acres of land were permitted to go out of cultivation.

“In this holocaust of landlordism the Highlands of Scotland suffered severely.

“As Alfred Russel Wallace says, ‘The worst form of landlordism has been in Scotland, and especially in the Highlands, where the Highland chief held civil and criminal jurisdiction over his clansmen.’

“The history of the Highlanders is written

Cardinal Manning's Opinion

in blood, and forms one of the most dismal pages in the history of any country. The extermination of the Highlanders by hundreds and thousands at a time, who were forced away from that which was near and dear to their hearts, is evidence of the deplorable power invested in landlords at that time. It brought home to the minds of those who suffered the *real* meaning of the Land Question—which means—as Cardinal Manning says—‘hunger, thirst, nakedness, notice to quit, labour spent in vain, the toil of years seized upon, the breaking up of homes, the misery, sickness, death of parents, children, wives, the despair and wildness which springs in the hearts of the poor when legal force, like a sharp harrow goes over the most sensitive and vital rights of mankind.’

“The definition of the Land Question by Manning is indelibly written on the Highlands of Scotland, and even on the hearts of thousands in the Highlands to-day.

“There are those still alive who passed through this period of suffering and misery.

“From the fires and persecutions which devastated the county of Sutherlandshire many found a shelter in Caithness. Here they had to make new homes for themselves, and brought into cultivation land from moorland and heath.

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“On one estate in the Parish of Latheron twenty of these refugees, after they had got settled in homes made by their own industry, were again the victims of a ruthless eviction. Indeed, such evictions were pretty general until 1886 when a star of Hope made its appearance in the form of a ‘Crofters’ Act.’

“Notwithstanding the serious defects of the Crofters’ Act of 1886 its enactment marks a new epoch in the life of the Crofters of the Highlands.

“This Act which has been in operation for twenty-six years was surrounded by checks and conditions which have greatly detracted from its equitable working.

“As far as it goes, the results of the ‘Crofters’ Act,’ economic and social, have justified the anticipations of its promoters. Among other things it put a ‘sprag’ on the wheels of evictions by providing security of tenure to the crofter. It also gave him a ‘fair rent’ and compensation for improvements.

“These conditions, in effect, raised the Crofter from the position of a slave to the status of a free and self-respecting man.

“Previous to this the Crofters were rented in proportion to the improvements executed by them on their holdings.

“This system had a detrimental effect on agricultural improvements.

Larger Holdings Needed

“Since the passing of the Crofters' Act more improvements have been carried out than in fifty years previous to this.

“One of the principle grievances against which the Crofters of the Highlands have to contend is the smallness of their holdings.

“Herein lies the chief reason why the Crofters' Act failed to put a stop to the tide of emigration.

“The holdings, in the great majority of cases, were wholly inadequate to support a family in anything like comfort. Hence, as each member of the family grew up to manhood and womanhood, they left the parental home and went out into the world.

“Enlargements of holdings would have gone a long way to encourage the young men and women to remain with their parents, but the conditions in the Crofters' Act for enlargement of holdings were such as to retard the process of enlargement.

“The inadequacy of the Crofters' Act as a social remedy may be seen from the fact that it made no provision for those crofters who had the misfortune to be under lease at the date when it became law.

“A large portion of the crofters of the Highland counties fell within this category, and failed to come within the sways of the Act—an Act which gave power to the Commissioners

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to declare the rents of certain crofters exorbitant and unjust, while in other equally necessitous cases they were powerless to interfere.

“All things come to those who wait, and salvation has at length come to the latter class in the Small Landholders (Scotland) Act of 1912. This Act is much more comprehensive in its scope, and if administered in justice and equity will remove many anomalies which grew up under the other Acts.

“The social redemption of Scotland, and especially the Highlands, lies in the creation of new holdings and in the enlargement of present holdings.

“There are millions of acres of land suitable for agricultural purposes which, if utilised wisely, would go a long way to build up the fast decaying population of our rural districts.

“The Small Landholders Act is but the dawn of greater freedom and security, of better opportunities for an independent and prosperous career on the land.

“‘Do not let us have false remedies,’ said Lloyd George previous to introducing his famous Budget.

“For centuries the resources of the land were frozen up in the old feudal system. The spring time has arrived and the thaw has set in. In the case of land monopoly Caithness has been among the chief sinners.

Evils of Great Estates

“‘Adding house to house and field to field’ seemed to have been the pleasurable occupation of landlords for generations.

“The Roman Empire grew corrupt with a few great owners of the soil in power and luxury, and the mass of the people became enslaved and poor.

“Pliny’s famous utterance sums it up ‘*Latifundia perdidere Italiam.*’ ‘Great estates overthrew Italy.’

“If great estates in this country have not overthrown it, the manner in which they have been governed has been instrumental of much evil.

“They created an arrogant aristocracy. The lord of the Manor, whether he acquired his estates by inheritance or purchase, treated it solely as so much property to be made the most of, quite irrespective of any rights of the people who lived upon it.

“They assumed the right of treating the land exclusively as a source of personal wealth to which they had an indefeasible right, even at the sacrifice of all that the people who live on the land held most dear.

“The holdings which the people had reclaimed from the heath were taken from them and given to the pluralist farmer.

“There is a **LAND HUNGER** in the northern

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counties ; and we see no valid reason why this wide-spread desire should not be granted.

“In Caithness many estates are presently in the hands of firms of lawyers for management. These have not the advantage of the personal care and knowledge of a resident proprietor ; and it would be greatly to the advantage of the community, as well as of the tenant, if this land were to revert to the absolute control of the people.

“Another practice which militates against the success of good management of estates in the Highlands is that of landlords absenting themselves from living on their estates. There is a loss of interest both in the estate and in those who live upon it. Rents are remitted to the countries where the absent landlord resides ; and the general management is placed in the hands of factors, who in many cases have proved themselves to be greater tyrants than the landlords.

“The same cause has operated in bringing about much of the misery and disturbances in Ireland.

“The proverbial hardness and harshness of the agent who collects the rents for absent land-owners is, alas, too true. In Caithness it has left an indelible stamp on the social condition of the people.

Hovels for Homes

“There is another social grievance with which the people of the Highlands have to contend, and that is miserable dwellings.

“I venture to say that 79 per cent. of the crofters' houses would not stand the test of our sanitary requirements. Landlords would give no assistance, and the poor people were so far reduced by rack-renting as to be wholly unable to do anything themselves.

“The homes are little better than hovels—certainly not good enough for housing the landlords' dogs. In parts of Caithness, even at this date, the people and the cattle go in and out at the same door, and live in the same house and under the same roof.

“This condition of social life has had a bad moral effect among the inhabitants. It constitutes not merely a disgrace, but a positive danger to the physical and intellectual development of the youth of both sexes.

“These conditions of family life are permitted in open violation of the health laws, and yet the authorities do not take action!

“Owing to the smallness of the holdings, and the unsuitableness of the dwellings, the population of the Parish of Latheron in Caithness—the largest parish in extent in Scotland—has gone down 50 per cent. in twenty years. The youth, when they come to years of maturity,

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leave the parental home, and go either to the colonies or migrate into the cities of the south.

“Marriageable people are few, and the conditions of home life are such as to give no encouragement to young men to marry.

“This aspect of the situation is equally true of all our Highland parishes.

“If the situation is such under the law of Free Trade, what would it be under Protection?

“Previous to the repeal of the ‘Corn Laws,’ the people of the Highlands passed through a period of privation which was deplorable in the extreme.

“The landlords and big farmers of Caithness agreed among themselves to export all their corn to the southern markets, and refused to sell to the starving people any of it. The matter became so desperate in the county that the people had to take the law into their own hands.

“This led to what was called the ‘Bread Riots’ in Caithness.

“The people met in their hundreds at Wick, and demonstrated by force that the corn would not be sent out of the county so long as there was need for it in the county.

“After the repeal of the Corn Laws, and the institution of Free Trade, things began to amend.

“In a sense Free Trade might be called

In Praise of Free Trade

the Day Star which had arisen with healing in its wings.

“Protectionists are usually Capitalists and Monopolists. These are the men who thrive and fatten under protection.

“Thank God, we have got beyond the stage when each tribe was separated from its neighbour by a belt of waste land never crossed except at risk of death, when exchange of goods was effected by the battles or the foray in which the warrior spoiled his slain foe, or ravaged the home of the absent one. Free Trade has opened up new facilities for mutual intercourse among the nations of the world, and each uses the arts and products of all.

“Its tendency is to preach ‘On earth peace, goodwill towards men,’ and to establish a truism as old as the world—the common fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man.

“Man is heir to Natural Rights which ought to be upheld and respected by any Government professing to be founded on the principles of Christianity.

“Solon says ‘that an injury to the meanest subject is an insult to the whole constitution’; and I think it is Grotius who says, ‘Men being by nature free, equal, and independent, no one can be put out of this estate and subjected to the political power of another without his own consent.’

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“Alas, how often have men been refused their inalienable rights in Christian Scotland—refused by men who professed to be paragons of Christian charity and all that was essentially righteous! The history of the Land Question in Scotland gives the lie direct to their pretensions.”

CHAPTER V

THE LAND QUESTION IN SCOTLAND

(II.) THE LOWLANDS

THOUGH things may move more slowly in the Lowlands, there is abundant evidence that Mr Mackay's anticipation given in the last chapter will prove true, and that the people in the south of Scotland are ready to join with their northern fellow-countrymen in demanding a drastic change in our land laws. The Lowland farmers and rural labourers have not as yet formulated a policy of their own, but dissatisfaction with the existing state of things is well-nigh universal. Glasgow virtually leads the movement for the rating of urban land values—a fact that is probably responsible for two things:—On the one hand the lead given by Glasgow has certainly done much to give definition to the policy of municipal progressives in the matter of land; on the other, it has, perhaps, tended to check

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the growth of a strong policy in the rural districts of Southern Scotland, by presenting the land question in an unattractive and, to those unstrained in economics, a somewhat incomprehensible way. Something is wanted to take the place filled by the Land Nationalisation Society in England. That the Lowlanders have plenty to complain about will, however, be evident from the following letters. Mr W. C. Anderson, "The Shielin," Gidea Park, Essex, writes:—

"In response to your appeal in the Press for facts bearing on cottage accommodation, etc., one or two facts which have come under my notice may be of interest. These can readily be verified (if you think them of sufficient importance) by reference to individuals residing in the neighbourhoods referred to. I will be pleased to furnish names of parties to whom you could apply.

"*Arran*: In Brodick I came across a man in a fair way of business, Ribbuck by name, a German by birth, who had been settled there for a good many years, and who had at least one son in a separate business in the same village. The house which this man had proved too small for the needs of his increasing family, and, I understand, permission was asked of the proprietrix to add to it by building an annex, or adding

An Underground Tea-Room

a story to the then existing building. Such permission was absolutely refused, and to get over the difficulty, the man, assisted by his two sons, dug a small square hole in the kitchen floor, and gradually excavated an underground room underneath the kitchen, as large, or practically as large, as the kitchen. This work had to be done surreptitiously, and the earth as it was dug out carried in pails across the road to the foreshore. The room was finished by being panelled with wood, and was converted into a living room. Light was obtained by a small window near the ceiling of the room, and which on the outside was almost on the ground level. I may add that my wife and I had tea in that room, which was worth a visit as an evidence of the ingenuity and persistence of a man to get over a difficulty raised by the unreasoning and arbitrary treatment of the proprietrix. Arran may not interest you, but if it does, you will have little difficulty in compiling a mass of evidence of a like nature.

“*Arisaig* (West Highlands): Owner was, I think, a Mrs Sinclair. Some fishermen from the East Coast saw an opening for their labours in *Arisaig*, and put up for themselves wooden huts on the shore. An injunction was got against them by the owner of the land and they were compelled to remove their huts. The men moved them *below* high-water mark, but the owner would have

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none of it, and again brought the Law to bear on them. At this juncture a strange thing happened. The men had found a ready market for their fish locally, and not only so but had been able to commence sending fish by rail to other places; and when the owner threatened to make it impossible for the fishermen to continue to live in the district, the Railway Company granted the men permission to remove their huts to the steep sloping sides of the railway embankment.

“Now I understand this action on the part of the Railway Company was distinctly against the terms of the agreement on which they got the land; but the owner, who was quite ready to go to Law with the fishermen, who had not financial resources to enable them to fight the case, took no action, at least during the time I was in touch with the place, against the Railway Company. The Company had, I was informed, taken the step deliberately, and were prepared to defend if an action were raised. As such an action would have revealed too much of the autocratic government of owner, it, to my knowledge, has never been taken.

“I do not know if these are the kind of instances you wish to get in touch with, but if so, I can assure you that in my travelling through Scotland which I did for years, I came across many of

Landlord Tyranny

them, and can instance cases where the owners of the land dictate as to who the tenant may or may not allow to stay in their house, and I have heard of a man having been taken by orders of the owner of an estate, put on board a steamer, and *banished* from his home with no possibility of redressing his wrongs, simply because on one occasion he had displeased the owner of the land on whose property his house stood."

Mrs Marian Verran contributes from her own experience the following:—

TRAGEDY OF A THATCHED FARM HOUSE

"Born in Scotland, though with English blood in my veins, I have retained throughout my life a deep love for the country of my birth. To me, therefore, the decrease of population in that beautiful land seems nothing short of tragic, and it brings to my recollection an event which, forty years ago, did much to shape my character as an ardent Radical.

"A noble earl of long pedigree, whose fathers were renowned—and not always to their credit—in the annals of Scottish history, desired to build himself a castle, larger and in a more elevated

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position, than the beautiful residence which he and his family occupied. Architects and builders were brought from Edinburgh and Glasgow to discuss with the earl and his consort, a lady of great pride and some beauty, the best position for the castle that was to be built. A site was selected which overlooked the magnificent grounds of some hundreds of acres that the earl had been preparing to surround his residence.

“When the building had reached its second story it was discovered that from the windows of that story could be seen the small thatched cottage of G——. In this little house lived two men and their sister, and within these walls for one hundred and fifty years their forebears had lived and died. For a hundred and fifty years by sweat of brow had they turned much of what was morass into a prolific farm.

“I have seen these men plough a field nearly as steep as a wall ; but they never had any thought of dropping the work. Early morn and dewy eve found them still at it. The home of their forefathers was very dear to them, and though small and primitive, they asked for nothing better. They paid their rent to the day, and though they held their farm only by a yearly tenure, none of them had ever expected to be turned out. Their house was open and hospitable to every wayfarer that passed their door, and friends and neighbours

Nabothis Vineyard

were received with an affectionate kindness that you rarely see anywhere but in Scotland.

“When the earl’s lady saw that this thatched house was visible, it was immediately pronounced an ‘eyesore,’ and the fiat went forth that it must come down. The farm was held by yearly tenure, and the earl’s factor was ordered to ride over next morning, and give the family notice to quit. The factor knew the news would be terrible for them, but his duty was to obey, and he went. The three were absolutely broken-hearted, and asked if it would be any good to write to the earl or the countess. ‘No good whatever,’ said the factor, ‘but we will find you another house, probably a larger one, and another farm.’

“‘We want nae ither hoose,’ they said, ‘this hoose did for oor feyther and granfeither. It has been the hame o’ us a’.’

“The long and the short of it was that they were turned out, and moved to a farm some miles the other side of the little Lowland town which was nearest them. The house belonging to the farm was only being built, and far from finished, and the weather that followed their taking possession was bleak and wet. The rooms were still damp, and the sister, weak from hard work, and broken-hearted at leaving the old home, in a short time developed rheumatic fever, from which she died.

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“The land belonging to the fresh farm had not been cultivated so highly as the land they had left, and yet the rent was higher. There was no longer any sister to see to the milking of the cows, the churning of the butter, and the making of the cheese. The brothers soon found themselves in difficulties. Their small savings were of little avail, and they were soon bankrupt. In a little more than a year they had to leave the farm, and find a lodging in the town, selling their stock and implements, on the proceeds of which they managed to live for a month or two. No suitable work could be found, and the elder brother, no longer a young man, literally died of a broken heart, while the younger searched the country for work, at last finding it on the farm of an old friend.

“The home was pulled down, and the earl’s outlook was no longer obscured, nor her ladyship’s temper ruffled by having her view marred by the sight of a thatched house.”

Mr William Swan, of Bethel Cottage, Greenbank, Dumfries, writes :—

“Seeing your letter in the *Dumfries Standard* some time ago requesting information regarding small holdings, etc., we should like to give you our experience. Up till Whitsuntide last we

An Unpromising Start

lived at a small place called Houston, a cottage on Lord Chilston's estate, about three miles from Dumfries. Three years ago it was to let, and as we were on the look out for a place at the time, the under-factor, who resides beside it, stopped me one night as I was passing, and asked if it would not suit us. I said I thought it would if the rent were right, and he replied that the rent was six pounds. I informed him that we would be quite willing to pay that, but as we could not live in a place that was in such a rough state, and it would take a deal of cleaning up, we would not like to do so and perhaps have to leave it in a year or two. He said we need have no fear of that as there was no shifting on their estates. It was arranged that he would write to the factor, and in the course of a few days we were informed that we were to have the house. The people who occupied it before were getting up in years, and the man having to walk a considerable distance to and from his work, would have little time for gardening, etc., and the place had got into a very neglected state.

"The state of the hedges and garden can scarcely be imagined, a mass of briars, nettles, etc. I proceeded to have the place thoroughly cleaned, but it took a lot of time and work to do it. Almost every spare hour I had I spent on the place.

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“We papered the house throughout, put in about a dozen panes of glass, painted the windows and several doors at our own expense. We laid out the front of the house nicely, repaired and painted the front gate and posts, put two new gates in the garden, removed two old hedges in front and put in young plants. I also had to put in a fence alongside the house, and put up a stile leading to the well, which was at some considerable distance from the house, and clean out the drain which carried the overflow from said well. We also levelled the ground at the back and planted shrubs, a job which took several days, and paved out the outhouse and put a window in it. A neighbouring farmer had a piece of rough ground adjoining our place, and kindly allowed us to cut as much bedding as we wanted, so that altogether it made quite a model small holding.

“Last autumn I had just spent several days on the place trenching, etc., and had several tons of manure dug in, when I had a visit from the factor, who told me that he was afraid he would have to ask us to give up the house at Whitsunday as Lord Chilston wished to put a keeper in it.

“I replied that I was sorry to hear that, and very much surprised also as the under-factor had

A Broken Pledge

informed us when we took the house that there was no forcible removing on that estate if people behaved themselves, and I felt sure that we had done so. His reply was, 'Oh, yes, and I am very sorry about it, but there is no other house available, and Lord Chilston thinks there ought to be a keeper in this district. But you will be allowed for anything you have done for the place, and if there is any place on the estate to let you will certainly get the chance of it.' We were offered two other places on the estate, but both were quite unsuitable.

"I forgot to mention that we had the garden eaten up by rabbits more than once, and had no alternative but to net the place all round, but this of course we took all down before we came away. A few days before Whitsuntide the under-factor came to us to say that they thought it would be fair if we left the fences and other things which we had erected; including a good, double-boarded poultry-house, and went out rent-free for the half year. He asked if that would please us, and I replied that it would not by a long way, and that if that were the way they meant to treat us I had a good mind to remain in the house as we had no legal notice to remove. However, as we wanted no noise, we gave them their way of it, and left as stated. The Small Holdings Act is all right I have no

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doubt, but I have an idea it was the means of removing us from ours."

Lowland Scotland, however, has an honourable record on the land question. It was in Scotland that the farmers took Cobden's advice, and instead of asking for a return to Protection adopted high farming as a means of meeting foreign competition. Readers of that interesting little book *Our National Food Supply*, by Mr James Lumsden, may remember how the author contrasts the farming of Scotland with that of England, altogether to the advantage of the former country. In particular, he tells us of the enormous weight of meat the farmers of Aberdeenshire — and Aberdeenshire, though actually a Highland county, counts for our present purpose as a Lowland shire¹—can feed on an acre of land.

Dr G. B. Clark, writing in *Forward*, the Scottish Labour paper, on 27th July last, gives us a good insight into the reason of this success of the Aberdeen farmers. Advocating small farms as

¹ The division should be drawn between the mountainous crofter counties where the old Celtic customs and language still survive, and the districts, whether north or south, where these features are absent. Aberdeen, if far north, is hardly a characteristically Highland County.

Small Farms and Large

against large, and incidentally giving a splendid advertisement to the supporters of small holdings, Dr Clark says :—

“ For an example of this take the county of Aberdeen where you have the small farming system in operation. The average size of the farms in Aberdeen is 56 acres. Compare it with the counties of Berwick, Roxburgh, and Edinburgh, where large farms prevail. In Berwick the average size of the farms is 216 acres. In Roxburgh it is 139. If you compare the amount of arable land in these counties in 1871 and 1907, and the assessment of land for Income Tax about the same time, it will show that the small working farm is in every way more valuable than the large ones. Let us take first the amount of arable land in these four counties. Arable land, as you know, is much more productive than pasture. This table shows the increase of arable land in Aberdeen and the decrease in the three south-eastern counties :—

	Aberdeen	Berwick, Roxburgh, and Edinburgh
1871 . . .	548,000 acres.	380,000 acres.
1907 . . .	572,000 acres.	337,000 acres.

An increase of arable land in Aberdeen of 45,000 acres and a decrease in the other three

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counties of 43,000 acres. The assessment of lands for Income Tax purposes also points in the same direction. It is as follows:—

	Aberdeen	Berwick, Roxburgh, and Edinburgh
1861	£542,100	£833,000
1901	£619,400	£695,000

An increase of income from land of £77,300 in Aberdeen and a decrease in the other three counties of £138,000.

“Aberdeen has no advantage in soil climate or markets, and its only advantage is its small working farms. Lord Eversley shows further that these figures not only prove the advantage of the small farming system over the other, but ‘that Aberdeen with a cultivated area only 25 per cent. more than the three south-eastern counties, has nearly 4 times as many farmers and bailiffs and 50 per cent. more labourers. The total number of persons employed on its land is more than twice as large.’”

This comment of Dr Clark’s on the agriculture of Aberdeenshire is, as we said, in itself a striking enough justification of those who advocate smaller holdings. A mass of matter, however, has been placed in our hands by Mr James M. Russell, now of Thornbury,

High Farming in Scotland

Hempstead Road, Leckfield, Sussex, which may help to explain the decline in Roxburgh and the Lothians. Mr Russell was at one time a *large* farmer in East Lothian. He claims that, acting on the advice of Mr Cobden that the way to make farming pay under Free Trade was to adopt scientific and advanced methods, the farmers of East Lothian succeeded in the decades following the repeal of the Corn Laws, in establishing a system of farming that was the admiration of agriculturalists throughout the world. In support of his contention he quotes from an article by Mr A. G. Bradley, which appeared in *MacMillan's Magazine* for 1891, entitled "Twenty Years ago in East Lothian." Mr Bradley writes as follows:—

"Twenty years ago the Lothians were the show ground of British agriculture, and the Lothian farmers confessed to be the most skilful husbandmen on a great scale that the world had ever seen. It fell to my lot during a residence of two years in East Lothian to be frequently in the company of people from all parts of the country, and indeed from many countries, who were capable of forming an

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opinion and drawing contrasts on such matters, and had indeed come there for the purpose. Whether from Suffolk or from Denmark, from Lincolnshire or the Rhine Valley, the note was the same—one of unqualified admiration and unconcealed surprise. East Lothian in August was indeed a sight worth looking at. I have seen the north-western prairies in harvest time; but the point of view there is, how little has been done by man in the production of such an ocean of waving grain, and how much the potentialities of mere area. East Lothian, on the other hand, is the triumph of Science. With November came the potato lifting. What a difference there was between the gathering of the crop from those vast clean fields, and the same operation in the land which the potato has made so particularly its own. Beyond the Channel the tattered Irishman, up to his knees in a tangled mass of weeds, laboriously scoops out his year's rations from his petty patch with a long-handled, narrow-bladed spade. In Scotland the lifting ploughs go tearing up the long, clean, weedless drills, scattering right and left the luscious, mealy roots that have perhaps been already purchased for the most famous London restaurants."

Now Mr Russell contends that under this

A Great Farmer

high farming in the Lothians, in the thirty years following the repeal of the Corn Laws, the amount of labour employed on the land and the rate of wages paid were doubled. He contends that the influx of labour into the towns and the unemployment that follows from it would not have occurred had the Nonconformist and Liberal tenant farmers who developed this wonderful culture been allowed to continue undisturbed, and, we presume, their example had been followed in other parts of the country.

That Mr Russell was himself a very skilful farmer seems clear. The Special Agricultural Commissioner of the *North British Daily Mail* in 1887, speaking of two farms he leased, says,

“as the fertility of the farms increased from year to year, through proper cultivation and judicious outlay, the tenant (Mr Russell) was able to pay more for labour till, in 1882, for the two farms, it [*sic*] reached the astonishing sum of £3,192, 8s. 9d.”

In 1872, Mr George Hope, one of the finest of these farmers, and one who had stood for Parliament, and taken a great part in the agitation to secure a reform of the land laws,

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received notice from his landlord that his lease would not be renewed. According to the article already quoted,

“the first tenant of the name had found the farm a tract of cold clays, of water-logged fields, and marshy, furzy commons. The last had created not merely a national but an European reputation for himself and his farm.”

But Mr Hope had stood as a Parliamentary candidate in 1865, advocating an improved law of tenure, on behalf of the Scottish Farmers Alliance, and his landlord, exercising the powers entrusted to him by law, was determined to get rid of him.

This exercise of a landlord's “rights” brought upon the head of the unfortunate landowner a storm of protest which, to quote again, “must have made this really kind-hearted gentleman wish that he had never been born.” From all over the country and even from foreign lands came letters of indignant protest; sarcastic questions were asked in the House of Commons; the London Press was filled with the story. But, according to Mr Russell, this eviction was not the last, though the most notorious, of the

Crushing an Industry

Lowland farmers. Mr Sadler, the first tenant farmer to purchase a set of steam cultivators, was soon evicted for the crime of agitating for a better system of land tenure, and ultimately all the tenants who supported Mr Hope at the election of 1865 were "either extirpated out of the county or crushed into submission by the landlords." Among those thus evicted was Mr Russell himself, who tells us that the break up of his farm involved a loss to him of £20,000 capital sunk in it, in itself a striking illustration of the high farming backed up by abundant capital of the Lothians.

It may, perhaps, be well, in closing this chapter on the land question in the Lowlands of Scotland, to give the Rev. Dr. John Ker's statement of the demands of these great capitalist farmers of the Lothians. Writing to a Mr Anderson of Alford, Dr Ker summarises the policy of Land Reform as understood in the Lowlands in the year 1883:—

- "1. The *entire* abolition of hypothec, which has forced up the rents by pitting needy adventurers against prudent, honest men.
- "2. The right to compensation for improve-

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ments, which would encourage cultivation and do away with the necessity for leases, giving a kind of fixity of tenure, as not many landlords would be in a condition to buy up the improvements. Greater anchorage to the land on the part of the farmer would be a sort of resident proprietary, and would lead, I hope, to some way of anchoring the farm servants also, and improving their condition.

- “ 3. Such control of the game as would make the cultivator feel that his crops, under Providence, were in his own hands. The rabbits and hares seem to have taken the place of the old *Caterans*, and they cannot be bought off by *black-mail*. What would be thought of a landlord who fancied wolf preserves, and would not allow a shepherd to kill his favourite beast by hook or by crook?
- “ 4. I suppose greater freedom in cropping, etc.—though I do not understand this so well—though I can see that a farmer must be allowed to use his skill and energy according to soil, climate, markets, etc.
- “ 5. Reduction of valuation of rents will come of itself, and will be reached by a

A Modest Programme

balance between the lowering influence of foreign competition and the increase that may come from improvement in cultivation or change of products. I hope the farmers will not be diverted from their rights by reductions of 10 to 20 per cent. in bad years. What is wanted is a permanent settlement and *independence*. A man can be a man only on such a footing.

“6. I do not think the country will sanction any fixing of the size of farms. That must depend on circumstances and on the ability of the cultivators. We need all sizes of farms, like steps in a ladder, and we cannot cut it either at top or bottom. Stimulus and hope are great elements in life, and all sorts of sizes help these.

“7. Most people would like to see a cure for the plague of deer forests. There are two things which would check them, which we have a right to demand—a heavy tax on them as an unprofitable luxury; and the privilege of the people to take the fresh air on the hills wherever they do not interfere with the cultivation or disturb domesticated animals. (I would not reckon Cockney

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sportsmen among these last.) The reduction of the deer would open up many glens where small farms could conveniently nestle."

"Agree with thine adversary quickly whiles thou art in the way with him." The landlords of Scotland may have cause to regret that they did not agree to this programme of the Lothian farmers thirty years ago!

CHAPTER VI

ENGLISH LETTERS—CONSTRUCTIVE

THE English letters in the third and fourth chapters of this book chiefly deal with the demand for land in its various forms. The writers complain of the difficulty of obtaining land, those who have succeeded in leasing any, of the insecurity of their hold upon it. Sometimes, too, the complaint is of bad housing, often of the "tyranny of the countryside," on which Mr F. E. Green has recently written so interesting a book. For the most part, however, their ideas of reform can only be inferred from their complaints, and there are few or no positive suggestions. Even in the interesting letters that make up the following chapter the proposals are only slight and vague. Nevertheless, they are written by people who have not only felt the LAND HUNGER, but have some ideas of their own as to a remedy. A. J. M. is a humorist, with

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a quaint trick of rhyming which reminds us of that ancient democrat, John Ball. He is a railway signalman who, he tells us, has for thirty or forty years worked twelve hours a day, and naturally he has cast desiring eyes on the land, hoping to get a footing there. But he is sceptical, especially of taxes on land values, and inclined to think members of Parliament, who have theories on the land and other questions, mere faddists. One gleans from his letter the light in which much talk in Parliament appears to the land-hungry man anxious for something to be done, and not much edified by trifling which does not get to the point. In another letter, which we do not reproduce, he returns to his views upon the iniquity of motor cars and land taxes, but that which follows will probably suffice to show his views.

“Are you not taking a strange step in asking for proposals or results from practical people for the benefit of rural districts? I generally look to townsmen for a description of country ills, and a prescription for their cure. Indeed quite a number of short cuts to comfort and competence have been hinted at, or pointed out. Such famous, I might say fabulous, sums have

Tampering with Time

been secured from small plots that might make the mouth of a Klondike gold-digger water. With considerable experience of gardening I have concluded that if every crop not only had seed in itself but was spontaneously reproduced, I should fail to gather, market, and take the money in the time given. What of time however when our daylight savers step in to ease the strife if not to lengthen life? Joshua, that brave old warrior, might say, 'Sun, stand thou still while we finish the fight.' Modern miracle-mongers wave their wand, put out the hand, and save by the hundred, hours of daylight, and to this foolish fiction men by the score who sit where statesmen should, with councillors galore, the country o'er, have set their seal. As 6 A.M. is the standard hour for multitudes of country toilers, I may add that the small-holder, foolhardy enough to go among his crops at 5 A.M. in May, might lighten his lot later on, by spoiling his crops. As to those twaddlers who would tamper with time, I would like to compel them to set out in search of horses or cows at 3 A.M. from April to September, or send them to work in standing corn on a mid-summer morn until there was a return to reason, and the cry went forth, 'Let common time remain in harmony with common custom and common sense.' Multitudes might need to go to bed

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before night, and rise in the dark in order to save daylight, and this is an enlightened age. Wild talkers at least are not all in a cage. Then poultry farming is to many so charming, one can scarcely count his chicks too fast. Are there not such strains that, if you only take pains, you may get on the road of a Rothschild? One thing I have certainly done, got slightly eased in pocket by following advice freely given. Another would turn toilers into small holders, when such a trifle as a pound a week may be easy to pass. I am under the impression it will want some picking up yet. Another sees no difficulty in paying every man his pound. You have only to stop it out of the rent. To this goodly company of self-satisfied competitors we may add the 'Land-tax Valuers.' Force on this fad, and the nation will be glad while the country blossoms as the rose. I am not so sure. It looks to me about as certain to secure success as taxing corn would be to cheapen bread. 'Land hunger'—yes, I have felt it, and sought by various means to secure a small holding. But the prospect was not bright even if I slept by night and worked all the day, when the rent required might run to £8 an acre, or more with buildings thrown in. Time, experience, and observation have eased, if not appeased, it, for I have watched others setting

Against Land Taxes

out and slinking or sinking back until coming to the conclusion that if pounds are to be picked up there has got to be less draining done at the pub and more at the pore than was the custom of yore, when some have set out as on their own. It is said that 'extremes meet'; so while Land-taxers would lighten the load by taxing the burden, Tories would hang the burden on the toilers' neck. While I would like to see land as in the Nation's hand I have no wish to see the fathers and farmers of land become as slaves that sons may sell or squander what was gained at such a costly price. Failing to secure a small holding on as favourable terms as desired in the country, a small plot was purchased at an exorbitant price in a town, and a cot erected. Along come L. George's land valuers, forerunners perhaps of land-taxers, and land which cost, owing I suppose to road-making, drainage, etc., £52, 10s., is put up regardless, so far as I know, of protest, to £79, while buildings are proportionately less. Is there not a splendid prospect for those who have taken care in the hope of receiving a reward when rates and taxes are taken from buildings, etc., and placed upon land, when the burden of roads, lighting, sanitation, education, feeding and medical treatment of children, parks, baths, etc., etc., are shifted from the shoulders of those who

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claim the benefits? I would suggest in addition to lounges, bath chairs for the lazy, and caretakers for the crazy. While I believe it would be well, were all land held and controlled by or for the community, I would allow landlords to place their own price on it for rating purposes, and that, when required, the nation should be empowered to take at so many years' purchase, whether for building, small holdings, or other public purposes. It will need energy and persistency on the part of those who set out, if they are to become successful small holders. The claws of the rack-renter and the tax-master must either be clipped or cuffed. Co-operation for buying and selling will be needful if the middleman is not to capture the cream, and for assistance in time of emergency. Even then I should doubt of success other than on a small scale. As to the cry for homes it might well become more bitter than that of outcast London, were the workers only to wake up, as by far the large majority of cottages are unfit for rearing mixed families, at least those with which I am acquainted. It should be made possible to take land at a reasonable rate. Absurd building bye-laws should be banished to the limbo of lost causes. Colonies formed where motor cars are forbidden until they are compelled to proceed at a reasonable, instead of as now allowed at

Unequal Rates

a reckless rate. No hideous hooting should ever be allowed whenever these do pass cottages, to waken sleepers and torture sufferers. Who shall control the building, if from feudal fetters we get free? Councillors and medical experts? or commonsense countrymen? I have heard of some country cottages being erected where it seems one idea had run away with reason, viz., that there should be no front-room. Now I am no believer in keeping a front-room simply for show, or where one must never except with slippers go, but to make it impossible to use either of two rooms to suit the dweller's convenience, is incompatible with freedom. We want cheap country cottages, outbuildings and surroundings, arranged and controlled in harmony with British freedom and fair play, and where can be raised a noble race.

“I have noted some very sound and sensible remarks on ‘Taxed land’ from ‘a farmer’s point of view.’ But when he states ‘The present system is perfectly fair,’ I respectfully challenge that. Some years since in a certain village where cottages are scarce, a new landlord succeeded in shifting rates—for a time—on to tenants; was it fair that these toilers should pay 100 per cent., a peer 75 per cent., farmers 50 per cent. on agricultural land, and then pay taxes to share a farmer’s burden, or so that landlords

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could raise rents? A bold step will have to be taken before we deserve the name we claim, if we are to prevent the mean-minded from turning their fellows on to the roadside for some trivial offence, or the greedy from inflicting unjust burdens if one dares to deal with a public grievance. But idiotic taxation will no more benefit the nation than the reckless squandering—now advocated—will make us safe. Righteousness will exalt recklessness fit for overthrow: indeed he first unmans himself who threatens or would fix fetters on his fellows. In concluding, one may say there was never more need for toilers, etc., to be awake to duty and to dangers. Let such as would tamper with time have short shrift. If more time is needed for leisure, play or pleasure, let the hours of toil be less. Let national and local burdens be lightened by spending less on the fads which fanatics would foist upon us, and which bring in no returns. Land taxers will not make the load lighter or the prospects brighter for small holders or cottagers in the country, or for toilers in our town. All has to be won by labour in one form or another."

It may appear, perhaps, that there is little to justify the inclusion of this letter among those

Rates *versus* Taxes

containing re-constructive proposals. The proposal that

“landlords should be empowered to put their own price on land for rating purposes, and that, when required, the nation should be empowered to take it at so many years’ purchase, whether for building or small holdings or other public purposes”

is, in reality, coming not from Land Reform theorists, but from one of the people, an endorsement of much that the most advanced theorists are advocating. Take the two leading schools of Land Reformers, the Single Taxers, and the Land Nationalisers, and you have here the central meeting point, so to speak, of their ideas. And it is given in an instructive way, which we believe voices the opinions of the vast majority of the landless workers of rural England. One of the greatest hindrances the Single Taxer has to face is the wide-spread opposition in rural districts to the idea of land *taxation*. This opposition A. J. M., as will be seen, fully shares, and voices in a sufficiently emphatic manner. But he not only does not oppose, he advocates the *rating* of land on its value. In fact he plumps

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for the "Tax and Buy" in an amended form of a "Rate and Buy" Bill, and with him, I believe, would go thousands of rural Englishmen, who would flatly refuse to vote for a man who proposed to raise an Imperial Tax on Land Values.

We turn now to one who is probably almost the most interesting personality among the authors of our letters. Mr James L. M'Cutcheon is a Bohemian if ever there were one. According to the "Benediction," contributed to a pamphlet of his by his friend Mr A. S. Gray, he is a

"Man Volcanic whom virulent pre-Ruskinism has for 33 years kept in continuous pedestrian eruption. A rebel against machinery, he has himself become a 'crank,' but a crank that has given practical expression to his faith, for in spite of ridicule and slights in propagating his mission, chiefly in industrial centres, he has travelled all over England and America without (except when in the hands of the police) the use of either tram, train, steamboat or other 'artificial human contrivance,' and still presents us with a glorious example of continuing virility."

In his *Key for an Earthly Paradise for Britain* Mr M'Cutcheon does, at least, do enough to show that this "Benediction" is deserved, and also to

A Practical Crank

demonstrate that, in spite of his Celtic surname, he is English to the core. The first is shown in his proposal to cover the country with a series of "Garden Villages for the Million" in which the old domestic arts of hand weaving, spinning, etc., may be revived; the second we infer from the map appended to his pamphlet, in which England is devoted to "gardening," and hence we infer to intensive culture and a large population, while Ireland is to be used for "cows and pasture," and Scotland for "sheep and forestry."

But crank or not, and, if he is a crank, Mr M'Cutcheon is a very interesting and even instructive one; the writer of the following letter knows something of what can be done with the land.

"As I understand you want some data *re* personal experiences on land, I beg to submit the following facts to you.

"In the late 90's I was living in Sheffield, and I met a rich man who offered me the use of some land free of rent, tax or tithe for 5 years (afterwards extended to 6 years)—land that he had no passing use for and which he was holding for a rise in value.

"Fact No. 1.—This land was located at

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Templeborough, on the main road between Sheffield and Rotherham, about 5 miles from Sheffield, and within a mile of Rotherham. It had a frontage on the road of 33 yards and extended 90 yards in its other dimension.

"2.—Its area was thus about 2,700 square yards.

"3.—I built a hut thereon to shelter me.

"4.—I fenced it and brought the whole area into good cultivation.

"5.—I dug a shallow well for surface water collection to be used in the garden.

"6.—I gathered manure from the road, commencing early in the morning, and the owner of the land having horses gave me one load of manure per year.

"7.—I had a money gift (1s. per week) from a friend, but as an offset against this I kept no living animal on the place and had no fruit trees or currant bushes.

"8.—Water for my own use I carried from a spring about 300 yards away.

"The result of these opportunities and activities, was that, with the exceptions indicated, I supported myself for 6 years solely by the production of the small patch of a little over half an acre, producing always more than I could consume, and using the surplus to secure such things as I needed from outside sources.

Living on Half an Acre

"If you want any further particulars about this experiment I shall be glad to write you. I might here add that I am a practical gardener and agricultural labourer, and that I have worked for 200 farmers and gardeners (great and small) in the United States, Canada, England, Ireland, and Scotland during the past 33 years."

With this letter of Mr M'Cutcheon's we couple the following "land experiences" of his present landlady, Mrs Sarah Barber, The Plain, Wandsworth.

"I have lived in Wandsworth for many years, and as a young woman worked on the land, and for about 30 years occupied a house and half an acre of land, from which a good living was made, by the cultivation of tomatoes and mushrooms, etc., coupled with the breeding and rearing of poultry and goats. I found goat keeping the most remunerative occupation, finding a ready market for the goatlings and the milk. The reason I am not still occupying this land, is that in 1903 I was reluctantly compelled to make room for London County Council improvements.

"I am firmly of opinion that if small experiments like this were extended through

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the counties, it would be the salvation of England, especially if Garden Villages were started, so that other industries would naturally follow. While men and women are landless they are slaves."

Mr John Pratt, of Shiremoor, near Newcastle-on-Tyne, has evidently thought deeply on the land problem. The following letter full of acute criticism and suggestions comes from his pen:—

"I have seen your letter under heading 'Land Hunger' in the *Northern Echo*, and it occurs to me that there are several points that I might comment upon which may interest you. Although I have never been in possession of any land except a piece of garden ground, the land question has always interested me. I did try to obtain an acre under the Small Holdings Act, but our local authorities say they could not get it at a reasonable price, and if they had put the compulsory clause in force, they would have so much to pay as compensation, etc., that they feel satisfied the applicants could not have made them pay. So I am still without land, and I suppose must remain so till either the Act is amended, or the people themselves combine and purchase such lands as are voluntarily offered for sale.

Land for the People

“You say in your letter that to ‘obtain the full benefits of Free Trade we must also have Free Trade in Land.’ I differ with you on this point. If we had Free Trade in land there would be no power for the landless to make a landowner sell them any of his land, and it would only enable those who already had many acres to more readily get more still. We have an excellent instance of this in this county. The Duke of Northumberland is the largest landowner in this county, and only quite recently he bought still another farm that came into the market. The grasping nature of some men is disgusting. Why did he not stand aside and let some one else have a chance?”

“I am one of those who believe that the land of any country should not be bought and sold at all. Things that men produce are the only things that should be bought and sold. The land is the source of every man’s requirements; and, being so, I contend it should be equal to all men to obtain their requirements, and it can never be so until the system of buying and selling it is stopped by law. It should be restored to the people, the State, and kept so, controlled by the authorities of each district. Then each one of us that required land, and we all use it in some way, would simply hire it from the local authorities. The

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result would be that those who occupied the best land would pay the most to the public exchequer, whilst those who occupied the worst land would pay least to the public exchequer. This is the only fair and just way to trade in land.

“I don't know how long it will be before this system of equality to *use* the land will be adopted by us justice-loving people! but any one must see that we should at once get rid of the landlords' power by its adoption, and the people would then be able to get the use of a piece of land quite easily. In the meantime I advocate the people forming themselves into a NATIONAL LAND TRUST to purchase farms that are voluntarily put in the market. The ordinary people cannot individually own these farms, but collectively they can. If only one half of the ordinary people of this country will take only a £1 share in such a combine we should at once realise about four and a half millions of pounds, and this would purchase a few thousand acres. Are you prepared to get such a company formed and registered? If so, I shall be glad to assist and get others to assist. I may mention that I have already made many converts to the idea in this locality, and I am convinced the idea would 'take' if it were once launched.”

Small Holdings

A few days after Mr Pratt wrote again :—

“In my last I dealt with the question of ownership of the land, I will now express myself upon the question of cultivation of it after a slight reference to the question of occupancy.

“When the question of ownership is settled there still remains the question of occupancy. It is quite possible that the law may within a few years settle the ownership problem by declaring that no individual shall own any portion of the earth, yet under the same law it is possible for the people to be kept out of the use of land just as at present. It is easy to conceive our local authorities letting the land in too large a quantity to some individual, and thereby preventing others having the opportunity to get a piece.

“This raises the question of how much land is necessary for the individual to cultivate. The law as framed under the Small Holdings Act says when taking the land to satisfy those requiring such land that the present occupiers must be left in possession of fifty acres (or more when the land is below £1 per acre annual value). But I am bold enough to assert that fifty acres is not necessary for a man to earn a living income, unless it happens to be land

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that has been neglected, which would require a few years to bring it back to a good productive state ; neither is there any man living that can cultivate fifty acres properly by his own efforts. Then why should a man have more land than he can personally cultivate ?

“To this some people will say : ‘Oh, well, he can engage others to help him !’ Of course he can, but I ask : Would those other individuals not be better working a portion of land for themselves instead of working for another person ? Would they not be more likely to take a greater interest in their work when employing themselves, than when working as a wage-slave for some one else ? Does not the present system of letting a large quantity of land to one person who has to hire outside help to work it produce evils which ought not to exist ? I refer to doubtful practices of both masters and men, strikes, lock-outs, and quarrels generally. Neither can we expect these things to cease as long as the system of the master wanting as much as possible done for the wages paid as he can get, whilst the man employed endeavours to do as little as possible for his wages. The two attitudes are antagonistic. What, then, ought to be done ?

“To this I say the land should not be let to the individual in larger plots than *twenty* acres. If any land has got into a neglected state, it

Twenty Acres Enough

ought to be worked collectively by the local authority till it has been brought to a good productive state. Further, I believe it to be best for the nation for as many of its inhabitants as possible to be in possession of a piece of land.

“In fact, I advocate every man having an acre at least. Consequently, if twenty acres of land become vacant, I should not allow another individual to have the whole twenty acre plot if nineteen other persons wanted an acre each. I should meet the demand of the many in preference to the few.

“I will now try to convince you that when the land is occupied in small plots more produce is obtained from it, as well as finding work for many more people; and if it can be made to do both of these things, I think you will admit it is to the nation's advantage.

“If you take as an example a farm of, say 250 acres, you will find that probably four men will be employed, and the land is only producing about two-thirds of what it is capable of producing because it is not tilled aright. To make the land produce its full capacity the land should be tilled by spade labour, and if this were done instead of about four men on 250 acres there would be about twenty-five. Persons not conversant with the matter would naturally ask: Will it pay? Well if *all* land will yield as good

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results as the instances that have come under my notice I unhesitatingly say 'Yes.'

"The Salvation Army's Colony manager some years ago had a portion of a field dug by the spade, the rest of the field being ploughed. The crop when thrashed the following year, yielded £9, 10s. worth of produce per acre from the plough portion; the spade cultivated portion yielding £15 worth of produce per acre, a difference of £5, 10s. to the good. Without doubt you want to know how much it cost per acre to have the land dug? In this instance the cost of digging the land was not given, but I can give it from another source.

"A gentleman in Kent, to find work for London unemployed, set the men on to dig his land and paid them at the rate of 1s. 5d. per rod,¹ which works out at £2, 16s. 8d. per acre. Now if all land can be made to yield £5 worth more produce by having it spade-cultivated, and only cost £2, 16s. 8d. for doing it, the sooner the system becomes general the better.

"I also remember conversing with other two persons who gave me instances that each of them remembered of land being dug, one of them in one case actually doing the digging, with

¹ We print as written, but there is a serious miscalculation here. One-and-five-pence a rod works out at £2, 16s. 8d. a *rood*, not an *acre*.

An Interesting Experiment

practically the same result, the land in one case, Norfolk, yielding 18 sacks per acre, in the other, Durham, 17 sacks per acre.

“At one time my father had a farm, and I remember telling him of these experiments. He soon told me that it would not pay. I asked if he had ever tried it and he said, ‘No.’ ‘Then,’ I said, ‘if you have never tried it, how do you know it would not pay?’ ‘Oh, common sense,’ he said, ‘will tell anybody that. Look at the cost!’ I pointed out that it was matterless about the cost so long as the income exceeded the expenditure, but I could not convince him by argument. However, I got up early—I was at the farm on holiday—the next morning, and went and dug a piece of land about two yards square in a field where he was going to sow some wheat. When I told him what I had done he said: ‘Nothing will grow there, because you will have turned up nothing but a lot of yellow stuff. Before that will grow any thing I shall have to put a lot of manure on there.’ I told him not to do so, but simply to let it take its chance with the rest of the field, and let me know the result the following year. He said, ‘Oh, that won’t make any difference.’ However, the following year he told me that the wheat on the piece of land where I dug was as green as grass when all the rest of the field was ripe.

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“When I saw him again I said: ‘I have gained the victory, because you said the digging would make no difference without manuring heavily, but it has made a difference!’ ‘Yes, but then the wheat was useless,’ he said. I said, ‘Just so, but you did not finish the experiment. You should have left the wheat standing uncut till it was ripe; then have picked say, half-a-dozen of the best heads grown, and half-a-dozen of the best heads from the rest of the field, and thrashed them out by hand, and measured, weighed, and counted the grains of the two samples and noted what difference there was.’ ‘Yes, but what was the good of being bothered like that,’ he said. I said, ‘Well, the fact that it was green when all the rest of the field was ripe convinces me that it was not done growing, and if my theory was right it naturally follows that the grains would be larger, consequently heavier, or more of them, and the idea of measuring, weighing, and counting the grains was to test the theory.’ All he would say to this was that he would not be bothered. In all these cases the crop grown was wheat.

“Deep cultivation pays providing the land is properly fed. Well fed land with shallow cultivation will certainly prove better than badly fed, but to get the best results, I say feed well and dig well.

Deep Cultivation

"I once commenced to cultivate a piece of garden ground that had been lying doing nothing for two or three years, and when I started to dig it my neighbours asked what I was going to do with it. I said, 'I am going to grow some greens on it.' I was told, 'Mr So-and-so and Mr So-and-so had had it and had given it up, as they could not grow anything on it.' I said I was quite aware of the fact, but I thought I could. Well I had it about seven years, and when I left the district I was fairly worried by applicants for it. The explanation is deep cultivation. When I started with it, I found it had only been dug about four or five inches deep. No wonder the previous occupiers could not grow anything on it, and turned disgusted with it!

"But when all is said and done about deep cultivation, we have got to remember that there is really no encouragement for farmers to put the land to its best use. The landowners or their agents, especially the agents, are too ready to raise the rents as soon as they see the land is producing more. What moral right has any landowner to reap what the tenant has sown?

"In conclusion, I feel I ought to express myself upon the housing question. We cannot expect the housing problem to be satisfactorily settled until the system of private ownership of

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land is ended. In one district that I lived I had one and a half miles to travel to and from my work, not because there was not any vacant land at the place where I worked, but simply because the landowners would not allow any houses to be built. I know for certain that several people would have built at the place if the land had only been available.

“Private ownership of land has many evils besides preventing the construction of houses. I remember a case where there was a ‘beauty spot,’ closed to the public, which the public resented, and took organised action to assert their rights to enjoy the scene, which resulted in some of their leaders being prosecuted. This is far from being right, although the public in this case would probably not have been stopped from using the road had all the members of the public conducted themselves aright. But trees and plants were destroyed by the thoughtless members of the public, and in this case I must uphold the action of the owner in doing what he likes to protect his own. The public are doing wrong both in the destruction of plant life, and allowing the system of private ownership of land to exist.”

One old survivor of “the Hungry Forties”

The Foundation of Life

contributes this interesting little article which we print exactly as sent:—

“ IN BRIEF.

“ Recollections of things Social, Religious, and Political, by a rural Craftsman, born 6th August 1832.

“ 1ST, THE LAND, for food.

“ As a thoughtful and earnest British subject, I early began to *think*. My young Blood warmed to anger for the 1st time in 1845, when the Irish famine began by the failure of the Potatoe Crop there, and in England the following year. I shall not forget the cruel ejections of the Peasant Farmers after improving their Farms at Tipperary, etc. The Price of corn went up and through the Indian Mutiny and Crimean Wars, the Village Craftsman and still worse the Farm Laborer and his family had for many years a very hard time. My father as a rural Tradesman paid at one time as much as 12s. to 14s. per bushel for wheat, and for the 1st time I had to eat Barley Bread. I soon saw plainly that the foundation of life was the free access to, or possession of Land, and its cultivation by every worker. Ever since that time until recently

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I have noticed that the *one aim* of the country Squire was to buy out or turn out the *small* Farmer and Holder, make larger Farms until there is no more.

“As I grew to be a competent workman my next lesson on the Land question I learnt in the early Fifties, which I shall *never* forget, as it confirmed my own impressions and previous convictions.

“Called to do some repairs at a Farm House, both the Farmer and his Wife well known to me and Industrious workers, the Farmer sowing all his corn, and the Wife busy in the House.

“After I had finished, they kindly invited me to dinner. Sitting at the Table were his growing up Boys and Girls, and our talk was all on Families and Farming; and calling me by my Christian name, said the following words.

“‘It is all very well. You know—that I have 3 Farms at present in hand, and my Landlord is wanting me to take on 2 more. I can do it—but *if we are going on like that* where am I going for Farms for my Boys here?’

“Compare his words of 60 years ago with the ‘Land hunger’ of to-day—how true—my own firm convictions for 50 years past, are that *Land monopoly, large Farms, and larger ranches*—are a curse to any working community or Colony.

Seven Shillings a Week

“One more incident on the Land remains with me, and will abide with me.

“When ‘Buck’ and ‘Buller’ were contesting for a seat in one of the Devon divisions (I forget date), a collector of Taxes said to my Father in my hearing—‘the *Land laws* lay at the root of all the evil’—He had been a Farmer.

“It is the same to-day, is it not? *my* remedy, a suggestion.

“In conjunction with ‘Land Taxation’ I would limit the Private ownership of land to 160 acres *at the most* (4 Horse Team), at the Death of a landed Proprietor, let him leave each one 160 acres, the rest to be sold to suit Purchasers by Auction, and if no purchasers, then the *Government* step in and purchase at a fair price, robbing no one, as a reserve.

“I have seen a poor Laborer come to his very delapidated Cottage on a Saturday night, and only 7s. to maintain the wife and long family, after his rent had been deducted, his employer, a pillar of ‘the Church,’ and well able to give much better wages—with bread so dear.

“ PURCHASE

“As to land *purchase* for Allotments it is a failure in a place I know.

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“THE ‘PARISH COUNCIL’

was compelled by statute to find allotments for Applicants. They found them—in a short time the holders had notice to quit—the Land being sold for Building land. There are no buildings as yet, but the holders may have notice any time to say that their ground is wanted.

“CHECK TO COTTAGE BUILDING IN RURAL DISTRICTS

“Next to the *Ecclesiastical Priest* who insists on cramming you with his views, is the *Architectural Priest* who insists on his views of a Pretty Cottage. *I* want no *Professional Architect* for my Cottage with massive Brickwork, expensive Carpentry, Port Hole windows, with very small panes of Glass, etc., etc., the whole to cost for the benefit of the landowner, and master Builder, from £300 to £400. By all means let those who have the means employ their Architect. Give me as an operative, a Cottage with plenty of *room*, plenty of *Light*, and good *Sanitation*, 20 Rod of Garden *with a Sty* if for a Family. W. N.”

Hitherto we have heard most of the land, but comparatively little of the housing problem.

Cheaper Houses

W. N.'s protest about the "architect priest," however, may now be followed by an excellent letter from Mr J. A. Smith of 206 Croydon Road, Caterham Valley, Surrey.

"I have read with interest your letter in the *Caterham Weekly Press*, and reply hoping that what I have to say may be found of some value. I have lived and worked in various parts of the country, and have seen much of what its cottage accommodation is, and know their defects.

"This has led me to form some very definite conclusions.

"Here, in Caterham, the building trade wages are the same as in my native town, Derby, and though I have at the moment no means of comparison, I see no reason why the cost of building materials should be higher, yet the rent of cottages here is quite 25 per cent. above that of similar ones in Derby.

"Cost of land may account for some of this but will not account for all. The real cause of the trouble is the waste of labour by the manner in which they are built. This is done one or two at a time at the whim of speculative individuals and without any system in the building, whilst in Derby they are built by the street.

"But even there they have not that system

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I once saw used by a builder for whom I worked, and something of which I believe must be adopted if ever cheap and good cottages are to be provided. This I believe could be done in any place where a dozen cottages are required. The system consists of dividing the work into at least six parts so that at no time shall two trades be carried on in the same portion at once. A number of each trade is engaged, sufficient to complete the work in a definite time, and all materials are got on the ground and ready for use before required, so that there shall be no going back for anything. The ground being stumped out, the groundsmen get out the ground and lay the concrete ready for the footings, and pass on to the second block. The bricklayers lay the footings, etc., and carry up the walls ready for the ground floor, joists and door frames, and go to the second block, leaving the first to the carpenters who do that part and go to the second, whilst the bricklayers return and take the work up scaffold high ready for carpenters to fix window frames, then go again to the second block whilst this is done, and the scaffolder fixes the scaffold and loads it with material ready for them to return to carry up the building to the first floor, continuing in this manner until the building is ready for the roof and the slaters or tilers. These are

Speculators' Profit

followed by the plumber, who runs all pipes that will be covered, and puts up fixings for all his other work. After him the carpenter lays floors, fixes skirtings, etc., and leaves the place to the plasterers, followed again by the carpenters to finish their part. Then the plumber can finish his work, and leave all to the painters to complete the job.

"It is, of course, necessary that a substantial lead should be given to the groundsmen, bricklayers, etc., so that, having started, all trades can be kept continuously occupied until the whole of the work is finished.

"When this system is properly carried out, there is no slacking or waste of time, every man knows his work, and the whole goes like a piece of machinery, the cost of building being at least a third less than in the haphazard fashion generally followed.

"I have seen excellent six-roomed cottages erected and sold in the suburbs of London for £152, which I think speaks for itself.

"But unfortunately the tenants did not benefit by this, some few at the commencement managed to buy one for themselves, but soon speculators came in, and buying before a brick was laid, sold them again at a handsome profit.

"In one case that came to my notice 4 cottages bought at £152 each were sold again

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for £195 each, further there was a ground rent of £3, 16s. per annum (though each did not occupy more than 3 rod of ground). The rent charged was 9s. 6d. per week, and they were considered cheap at that. Though this was in town and the speculator could not carry things to the same extent in the country at present, there is no reason to suppose that, given the opportunity, they would not take all the advantage they could, and that any improvement in the position of the tenants would not be made an excuse for the imposition of continual increases in rent.

“I have also seen a little of what housing is when carried out by the local authority, and that is to my mind also a failure. They are always expensive in construction, and far from convenient. The architect seems to have expended all his ingenuity in their appearance; he has never lived in a cottage, and knows nothing of the requirements of a cottager. The places are badly lighted, and there is no escape from their being either draughty or stuffy.

“Then you may say, what do I propose? Well, the only way that appears to me to offer a prospect of success is for a body of men and women, who have the welfare of the country at heart, to join together for the purpose of erecting cottages where necessary, and then inducing

A Trade Unionist's Opinion

the local authority to take them over at cost price and keep them out of the reach of the speculator."

Again we quote from the interview with Mr George Edwards, the secretary of the Agricultural Workers Union, by a writer in the *Labour Leader*, which has already been used, on its critical side, in these pages. Mr Edwards' position is a peculiarly favourable one for bridging the chasm between the theoretic student of the land question, and those, like the writers of many former letters, who, without, perhaps, much economic education, have what is equally valuable and necessary in dealing with the question, much practical experience.

"SMALL HOLDINGS OR PUBLIC FARMS?"

"What is your opinion of the value of small holdings?"

"I don't believe in the small holder being compelled to pay the sinking fund. I advocate purchase by the local authorities in preference to hiring. Before small holdings can be worked to an advantage, the Government must establish some system of credit banks, and small holders must start schemes of co-operation."

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“‘You are opposed to peasant proprietorship?’

“‘I am dead against small holder ownership. Of all the applicants for small holdings in Norfolk, we have not had one single application for purchase. We have obtained 8,025 acres, and provided 825 holdings for applicants. The size of the holdings varies from 5 to 50 acres; most do not exceed 30 acres.’

“‘Do the small holders spend the whole of their time in the cultivation of their holdings?’

“‘The men who have plots of over 20 acres give their whole time to their own holdings; the men who have smaller holdings put in part time on the farms. A large number of the applicants have been agricultural labourers.’

“‘What do you think of the proposal to establish public farms?’

“‘I do not think farms under the State or County Council are better than small holdings. I should certainly give this system a trial first.’

“‘Is it true that small holdings have failed?’

“‘No, it is not. At Wignall the Industrial Co-operative Society is working very well. The purchase of seeds and stock and the sale of products are co-operative. The small holders have a common store, and an agent watches the market so that the best prices can be obtained.’

“‘I suppose the nationalisation of railways would help a great deal?’

A Hopeful Experiment

“‘The nationalisation of the railways would be a great benefit. Small holdings cannot be successful without cheap transport.’”

We conclude this chapter of *constructive* letters with the following account of the experiment made by the Sharnal Street Smallholdings Company, for which we are indebted to Mr C. F. Lambie, who has taken an active part in the work of the Company.

“The Sharnal Street Smallholdings Company experiment was undertaken primarily to demonstrate that the wage earner could not be really a free man until he had given to him an alternative to wages—*i.e.*, by providing him with land to enable him to provide his own and his family’s food with a sufficient surplus to sell to other non-food producers to enable him to buy food, clothing, furniture, etc.

“Secondly, to draw attention to the fact that the present currency system stands in the way because the gold standard being a fixed one the increased or retarded production of gold tends to a fluctuation of prices, as at present the increased production of gold is responsible for the increased cost of living. Believing, as we do, that the attention of those interested in

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the welfare of our country can be best obtained by getting them to consider an actual object lesson, we secured some 50 acres of land in Kent, situated between Gravesend and Port Victoria, in the Hundred of Hoo, on the high land between the Medway and the Thames, within five minutes of Sharnal Street Station, and five miles by road from Rochester. To develop this the Residential Smallholdings Company, Limited, was formed three years ago.

“The scheme is now well under way, the tenants being already at work on their land. The work of the Company consisted in dividing up the farm, and building detached houses to let on leases of 10,000 years with from one to five acres of land, at rents ranging from 6s. to 10s. per week, which rents can never be raised by the Company. The tenants have to pay the rates, and are responsible for the upkeep of their houses, but they have a right to sub-let at a profit rental if they wish, they in turn giving fixity of tenure and rent.

“For some time the Company worked a Home Farm themselves, not so much with the idea of making profit out of it, but because by so doing it became within their power to let the tenants have the use of implements, and also to do much work for them at low charges, which it would not be easy for them to do for themselves.

Five Acre Holdings

The intention was to let the Home Farm ultimately on the same terms as the other holdings, when the tenants became thoroughly established. Two of these were bricklayers, one a plasterer, one a carpenter, and two were labourers. With one exception, they were without capital, so the problem was how they would be able to live until their holdings made them self-supporting. This difficulty was solved by the Company employing them to build the houses which enabled them to draw weekly wages, and it was hoped that by the time all the work was finished, the men with five acres would be in a position to live off their holdings.

"The Company are allowing them time to pay for stock, etc., purchased for them, and for work done, by which means it is hoped to give them a fair start.

"They have also been put in touch with the Agricultural Organisation Society, whose Secretary, Mr Nugent Harris, has promised them the assistance of the Society in the formation of a Co-operative Trading and Trading Society, which the tenants are already getting into working order.

"Last year the Home Farm was given up and let to the then manager of the Company, and each man is now, with the aid of the Trading Society, seeking to work out his own

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prosperity. And we hope for a successful future. We have made mistakes, but on the whole one does not see that much more could have been done under the circumstances. In future schemes much could be avoided. It has been said that the tenants ought to have been more carefully selected, but this was quite a debateable point. To find wages for the men, however, we had taken them off the working of the land, and we thought that the proper way another time, under similar circumstances, would be to engage the men to work on the land under a manager at the ordinary wages of agricultural labourers, for the probationary period of two years. Presumably, under such a scheme, when putting up houses to yield a higher rate of rent than the ordinary cottages of the villages, there would still be the difficulty of the labourers during the first two years not being able to pay more than the ordinary village price, so they should only be asked to pay that price during that time, but they should be expected to do so. There should be a strict agreement that they would work under management, obey orders, and be expected to come up to the ordinary labourer's standard of work. At the end of two years, those who had proved their ability and capacity to learn, and who still evinced a continued desire for country life,

Training Small Holders

should be eligible for a lease on lines that had been previously arranged. If at any time during the probationary period a man proved himself in any way to be undesirable, he should be liable to dismissal on receiving the same notice as was customary in the neighbourhood, whether a week or a month. If a co-operative society were formed during the first few months, the men would be trained in the principles of co-operation, and at the end of the two years they would, together with the Directors of the concern, be made to bear their share of the responsibility for rejecting those who, in the opinion of the Company, were not fitted for the position of lessees. Two things would arise out of this. First: All the men's energy would be directed on the land from the start, and the fact that they had submitted to some kind of discipline would ensure that they would be better fitted to control themselves when they had to run more on their own responsibility. Second: Financially there would be no great capital sum to deal with, and even if they failed the Company would have the value of the sum paid in wages in the land.

“ In any scheme of Home Colonisation the main idea should always be to benefit the maximum number of families with a minimum of outlay, and to demonstrate the fact that if the wage-

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earner has the alternative of developing land under proper conditions, he should never become chargeable to the country, but would ultimately work out his own economic salvation. Without the alternative of the land, the wage-earner in this country must always remain a wage-slave."

CHAPTER VII

THE RE-MAKING OF ENGLAND

BY BROUGHAM VILLIERS

It is to be feared that the study of the land question in this country has been productive of as much heat as light. Yet this is not wonderful. As will be seen by any one reading the foregoing letters our antiquated, semi-feudal land system interferes in the most exasperating manner with people in various classes of society who require the use of land for any purpose whatsoever. The present generation has seen the growth of an articulate and powerful democracy anxious for development in numerous directions, and seeking everywhere readier access to land for its further expansion. But though modern democracy has modified out of all knowledge the character of the demand for Land Reform, it did not create it. Before the days when the working classes determined programmes and policies the middle

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classes complained equally bitterly. The iniquities of our leasehold system, the insecurity of the farmer's tenure, the tendency of entails to prevent the passing of estates from incompetent to energetic owners, still arouse the same discontent as in the days of our fathers, though now the expression of it is drowned in the louder voice of democracy demanding "the land for the people." Everywhere, where land is concerned, dead things rule over the living, and delay the birth of the things that are to be. Whether it is a municipality seeking to improve the housing conditions of its people, the rural labourer looking for an allotment and a decent cottage, the capitalist farmer or the business man anxious for security in the conduct of his business, everywhere the existing land laws cramp enterprise and progress. These grievances are nowhere merely sentimental. On the contrary, people of all sorts and conditions are worse off and consciously worse off than they would be with this or that reform of the land laws, with readier access to or more secure control of the land on which they work and live. The land question is a tragedy of crippled effort, still worse, perhaps, of prevented effort. LAND

“Social Statics” and the Squire

HUNGER is the aspiration of a great people for self-realisation.

That, therefore, the land question should provoke anger on the part of the Reformers is natural enough, though highly regrettable. Anger begets anger, and when the Land Reformer proceeds to tell scandalous stories of how the ancestors of our present landlords acquired the land, the wrath of the nobles and squires of Britain is no way lessened to the fact that the indictment is unfortunately true. Human nature being what it is, a noble duke who has derived wealth and honour more than is given to many kings from his title and his land is not reconciled to part with either by the reminder that he owes both to the fact that an ancestress in the days of the Stuarts or Georges was no better than she should be. The matter is rendered worse by the fact that probably no class knows less about modern ideas upon land than the landlords themselves. The picture of a fox-hunting squire reading the ninth chapter of *Social Statics* and understanding it is more humorous than convincing, and it has probably never occurred to nine-tenths of our landed aristocracy that such great men as Spencer, Mill, and Wallace have

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condemned the very system by which they live altogether. To them it seems self-evident that Land Reformers are a set of noisy and ignorant agitators, whose theories and proposals it would be folly to examine. Thus when the land question comes to the front in politics, when proposals are carried for a national valuation of land, or when Mr Lloyd George establishes a Commission to enquire into the workings of the present system the whole thing seems to the landowners of the country a matter almost too horrible to be real. One would think by the outcry that arises that the order of nature itself were threatened, as though the place of Britain among the nations depended upon the preservation of the system of landlord, tenant-farmer, and labourer to the end of time.

To any one who can look at the question with a little detachment the landowner's view of the of the case is humorous enough. Looking over the fields some autumn morning the wayfarer perhaps sees the terrified fox rushing desperately for life. The hounds follow in full cry, and the red coats gallop across the field, vanishing in a few moments out of sight. For centuries the same scene has, of course, been familiar over the

A Symbol

counties of England, so that, not unnaturally perhaps, the hunt and everything connected with it appear quite permanent and inevitable things, the abolition of which would make an important gap in the life of the world. To the spectator, perhaps, nothing seems more transitory, almost unreal. To him the hunt has no sooner passed out of sight than it may well seem a thing rather significant as a symbol than as a fact—a symbol of the very life of which the hunt itself forms so picturesque a part, the centuries old life of the squirearchy, of England. But a moment or two ago the hunt appeared in sight; now it has passed behind the hill, and there is only the distant baying of the hounds to remind him that it ever passed that way. Of course the hunt matters nothing. Its end is futility, a cruel futility, hedged about with certain rules and conventions of sport which serve to hide from honourable and stout-hearted men the fact that they are deriving pleasure from the torture of something weaker than themselves. And so it is with the whole country life of which the hunt forms part. Some day or other the whole thing must pass, as it were, behind the hill, the sum of its interests, its passions, conventions and honours

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appearing little better worth striving for than a fox's brush.

For, of course, the significant things in English country life from year to year are not those of the hunt itself, nor the matters discussed at its annual meeting. The things that matter are the fertility of the acres and the growing powers of men to exploit them for the good of all. Perhaps, when the hunt has passed by, the ploughman may be seen returning home over the fields, or the milkmaid drives home the kine from the meadow. These are the people that matter. Whatever may become of the landowner, however agricultural methods may change so as to render the capitalist farmer superfluous, in some form or other the actual tillers of the soil must abide. To test the land system of any country we must ask first how it has dealt with the labourer, what sort of comfort and well-being does he get as a reward for his work, and what opportunity has it given him to produce from the soil the greatest possible amount of wealth?

But of all this the landlords of England have no idea. Long prescription has given them absolute faith in themselves ; they feel inevitable,

Toryism of the Squires

as much part of the natural order of things as the woods and the fields. The thought of the outer world does not reach them — the very books which ornament their shelves show as little of modernity as the vicars' library. To them while the earth endureth not only seed time and harvest, but the seasons of the partridge and the pheasant shall not fail; the eldest son shall still follow in the entail, the second shall still inherit the family living. For in spite of agricultural depression life has been a pleasant thing to the squires of England, and it is hard for them to realise the changeability of the world.

Thus the growing questioning of the land laws reaches last of all the ears of those most concerned in it, and reaching finds them incredulous and angry rather than alarmed. The fact that criticism of their claims and of their order can be the result of carefully considered principles, of a thought more serious and profound than any of which most of them are capable, is one utterly beyond their grasp. They would not be persuaded even if Mill and Spencer rose from the dead, for few of them ever heard of either Spencer or Mill. And the

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land question is not brought to their notice by any such august advocates. Perhaps the pestilent Radical shoemaker begins to talk about Henry George; perhaps the yellow van appears upon the village green; or perhaps one sees by a very proper leading article in the *Morning Post* that the Chancellor of the Exchequer has made a most treasonable and wicked speech. But never for a moment does the stout English gentleman even suspect that there may be some valid justification to this criticism. The shoemaker is easily got rid of; the van passes to other villages; certainly the eyes of the country must now be opened to the enormities of the Government and its Chancellor! But somehow, incomprehensible as it may seem, the country fails to share the wrath of the landlords. On the contrary, the more outrageous the proposals of Mr Lloyd George the more support he seems to obtain.

The propaganda of the Land Reformers comes almost from another world, so totally alien is it to the whole landlord scheme of thought. It is menacing, logical, passionate, threatening the immediate destruction of all the hereditary reverences, the flattering and profitable customs

Tragic Misunderstanding

by which English landlordism has surrounded itself for centuries. To the class of all men least open to new ideas, most wedded to and most contented in its conventions, it propounds schemes involving the complete reversal of every established judgment, the surrender of every right, of every cherished privilege or honour. In its sterner forms it does not offer even a money compensation for that exile from the pleasant old-world life for which, to do them justice, no mere money compensation could probably reconcile many of the English squires. It is as if a member of the Humanitarian League fresh from town stood in the way of the hounds and brought the hunt to a standstill. The conversation that ensues is not likely to be argument, but vituperation — there is not sufficient community of thought to render argument possible. And now, when not only one treasured feature of the old life is threatened, but everything, how can we expect from either side understanding of the other? Blank astonishment or uncomprehending rage seems the only possible outcome. It is a tragedy of misunderstanding.

A tragedy, I say, advisedly, though the thing

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has its humorous aspects too; for in reality it is with neither of the combatants that the final arbitrament in the land question must lie. It is neither the land owner nor the Land Reformer, but the LAND HUNGRY man who must speak the last word here. Ideas—those, at least, that leave the study and come out into the world—are the expressions of forces; where there is no force the idea soon withers and dies away. The Land Reformer and the land owner have not to come to terms with or to understand one another; they have, both of them, to come to an understanding with the class of people who have written most of the letters in the foregoing chapters. The problem before us to-day is not primarily critical, but constructive, how to provide free play for the growth of every availing creative thing in the national life. It is vitally important that the LAND HUNGRY man—the man, that is, who sees some productive and profitable way of using a bit of land—shall have ready, ungrudging, and secure access to what he needs, a real opportunity to make his experiment in life.

The land problem, then, is not merely one of two antagonistic, utterly irreconcilable ideas;

Contented Farmers

it is a conflict between a suppressed development and the established order which prevents or delays its birth. It is not, for this generation at least, a question of destroying landlordism altogether, but of rescuing from its grip as much of the soil as will permit of the free expansion of any better system that the people can evolve. If there is more land than this, and, I think, there is very much more, it may as well continue for a time to be worked by the farmer for the landlord just as it is at present, seeing that the English farmers seem fairly contented with the relation of landlord and tenant. The lion and the lamb lie down together, and only about three-quarters of the lamb is inside the lion.¹ When the English farmers follow the example of the Irish and the crofters, and vote *against* instead of *for* their landlords their grievances will have attention. Till then we are justified in assuming that they have none, except that the British people insist on the liberty of buying their food where they can get it cheapest. For the present, then, where we cannot substitute anything better, the old system may survive, until the organisation

¹ The income brought under review from "rents of lands" in 1911 was £52,594,614, that from "the occupation of lands," the farmers, was £17,438,960.

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of a new English rural life has grown strong enough to absorb it.

Years ago I wrote, in *The Opportunity of Liberalism*, of the land question :—

“To put the Community in the place of the landlord is not enough ; the Community must be organised to administer as well as to own the land. To do this it is necessary to enable the public to buy land whenever they have developed locally an organisation capable of using it ; it is of no avail to hand it over to them when they have not.”

I see no reason to modify this view. The land problem is broadly one of so changing the law as to leave any new creative force existing in rural society free to act, to experiment. How far in the present and how rapidly in the future a better and more democratic organisation of agriculture and of rural life as a whole can replace decaying feudalism, depends upon the present extent, and power of development of the creative power of the rural democracy itself.

What chance has the rural labourer at present of such a development ? Mr F. E. Green has recently told us much of the tyranny under which

The Man with the Hoe

he is suppressed. Badly paid, badly housed, with no alternative employment if he displeases one master, he dare not speak his mind; even to advocate anything that would improve his lot is to court dismissal. The letters in this book confirm this, which is, indeed, common knowledge to every one who has attempted to raise the conditions of the rural labourer. Slow of speech in any case, and only too patient under injustice, the labourer dare only discuss his wrongs with bated breath. He must assure himself of the trustworthiness of those with whom he speaks; he must beware of eavesdroppers, for, "a bird in the air may carry the matter." No "paid agitator" speaks for him in his dealings with squire or farmer. The Trade Union secretary, whom the employer cannot "sack," is a more important guardian of the liberties of the town working man than *Habeas Corpus* or any legal guarantee. But if the rural labourer remonstrates he almost takes his life in his hands; he must submit to any tyranny rather than complain. Consequently it is not wonderful that we hear little directly from him, and that we cannot gauge how much he would do given a new freedom and a fair opportunity.

The Land Hunger

That, however, he is willing and anxious to move there are indications enough, and we can tell even the direction. The Allotment and Small Holders Act was immediately followed by a large number of applications for holdings under it, about which there are many things to be said. The applications prove one thing at least, they give a *minimum* statement of the desire at present existing for peasant holdings with security of tenure. Consider the position. The new Act was detested and feared alike by farmers and landowners, by all people in authority over the rural labourer, by the forces controlling that "tyranny of the countryside" about which Mr F. E. Green has written so eloquently. We know the number of aspirants who were prepared to brave this, but not the possibly greater number more timid or more prudent who refrained. Had the applicants been able to foresee all the difficulties they were to encounter their number might well have been less. Only in a few counties was the Act administered with any willingness. The County Councils are mostly filled by landowners and large farmers; representatives of the labourers have neither time nor money for the work. The rural labourer in the affairs of the

The Small Holdings Act

County Council is confronted with a dilemma something like that in the way of Women's Suffrage. Women require votes in order to influence Parliament, but they cannot effectually compel Parliament to give them the vote, because they have no votes. In like manner, the labourer requires a seat on the County Council in order to obtain small holdings, but he cannot and dare not stand for the Council until he has secured the independence a small holding would give him. It is no wonder that we find the Small Holdings Act has proceeded very slowly, worked as it has been mainly by its opponents.

In the next place, I must say I look with considerable distrust on the number of applicants who have not been approved, and whose applications have consequently been rejected. There may be cases in which a public authority may be justified in refusing to lease a plot of land to an applicant, but I am persuaded they are very rare indeed. In nineteen cases out of twenty, when a man proposes to take a plot of land to cultivate with his own labour, it is in the public interest that he should be allowed to try. We had far better have a proportion of failures than allow local authorities, largely hostile

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in spirit, any right of discrimination of this sort. The possibility of being refused a holding, after having braved the anger of the farmer who employs him by applying for one, may well tend to keep the labourer from coming forward at all. The slow working of the Act, even where candidates are approved, is equally injurious. All these things tend to reduce the proportion those who avowedly seek small holdings bear to those who secretly desire to have them.

Speaking of the earlier Small Holdings Act of 1892, Mr W. E. Bear tells us:—

“During my recent journeys through several counties, I made a point of inquiring of the labourers whether there was any demand for the purchase of land in their districts, and the invariable answer was a negative one. On the other hand, the reply to the question whether there was a desire of hiring land was as uniformly an affirmative one, usually with the proviso, if it could be obtained at a moderate rent.”¹

Because it provided only for the sale and not for the leasing of allotments by the public

¹ See *A Study in Small Holdings*, Cobden Club, 1893.

A Prediction Fulfilled

authorities, Mr Bear, within a few months of the Act becoming law, predicted its failure, and condemned it. Probably even Mr Bear did not realise how completely events would justify his criticism. The Act of 1892 has been one of the most ludicrous failures ever enacted by doctrinaire legislators. By comparison, with all its limitations, the Act of 1907 is a startling success. Its progress, too, confirms the soundness of Mr Bear's judgment as to the reason of the earlier failure. Of the applicants for land under the Allotments and Small Holders Act of 1907, 98 per cent. desire to lease, and only about 2 per cent. to buy land. But for the option of leasing provided by the Act, it would have been as hopeless a failure as its predecessor, a fact of which Tory advocates of peasant proprietorship would do well to take notice. Now, if the British rural labourer demanded the ownership of land there might be reasonable grounds of objection, practical and theoretic. Ownership implies the power to sell or to mortgage, and leaves the door open to a revival of landlordism by syndicates or millionaires buying up the peasant holdings, or alternatively might—nay, would give us a peasantry oppressed

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by mortgages and usury. It does nothing to get rid of one of the most pressing evils of our time, the generally prohibitive prices charged for land when any of it is required for public improvements of any kind; when he *owns* a site wanted by the public, the peasant is not less likely than the duke to take advantage of the position. These are practical objections; theoretically, the proposal for peasant ownership runs counter to the best economic thought of the day. We are not likely to enter upon a crusade for Land Reform for such a futility as that.

We may congratulate the rural labourers of England on the enlightened self-interest that has enabled them to avoid that pitfall. The English labourer has conclusively shown, wherever both options were open to him, that he wants security of tenure, but does *not* want to be saddled with the cost of buying land. To gratify a demand for ownership might have been unwise; to force it upon a reluctant democracy would be ludicrous. In the light of the actual applications of the people for land, the suggestions of Lord Lansdowne and other Tories for peasant ownership appear merely as an impertinent attempt

The Small Holders' Market

to "manage" the affairs of the working classes, instead of leaving them to manage their own. The first and most vital thing to do with the land is to make it absolutely easy for any man or woman who desires to do so, to get as large a plot of land as he or she can work, either in his full or spare time, with security of tenure and ownership of all improvements, as long as a fair rent is paid for the land itself. The demand for small holdings and allotments must be met in full.

There seem to me to be, however, limits to the extension of small holdings. According to the Census of Production the total value of British agricultural produce in 1907 was £196,374,000, while slightly under forty-seven million acres were under cultivation in one form or another. We may take it, then, that the average value produced by an acre of British land annually, as at present cultivated, is slightly under four pounds. The increase obtained by any small holder is, of course, immensely in excess of this. If we are to have any very large increase in the number of small holders in this country there will soon be a vastly larger home supply of the kinds of food stuffs they produce. It seems

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doubtful whether the small holders will be likely to compete much in the markets for corn and butcher meat; by far the larger part of the increase will probably be in vegetables, fruit, dairy produce, eggs, bacon, etc. It is probably altogether to the good, considerations of cheapness apart, that we import such a large proportion of our wheat. The general quality of the bread our people eat, surely the most important consideration of all, is thus uniformly good, even in the years in which British wheat has been most seriously damaged by a wet harvest time. This is, of course, no reason why the small holder should not grow wheat if he thinks it will pay him, but the probability is, he will find other things much more profitable. Corn is easily and cheaply carried, and suffers no deterioration in transit; and the small holder will probably find it pays best to buy such feeding stuffs for pigs and poultry as he requires from abroad, and produce on his own land things which can less readily be shipped in bulk, and fall off in quality when no longer fresh. In these he has a natural protection, and should, I am convinced, easily displace the foreigner in the home market. It is a very serious matter that so large a part of

The Sugar Convention

the perishable foods of our people has to travel over such immense distances before it reaches the consumer, and any improvement in our land laws that would enable native small holders to do for us what the Danes are doing now, would be a gain to the nation at large. Apart altogether, however, from the fact that most foreign nations are Protectionist and have tariffs on imported food, the very consideration that should secure to the British small holder the control of our own market will tell against the development of an export trade.¹ In selling perishable food stuffs the man on the spot must always have, other things being equal, a commanding advantage.

The small holder will then mainly have to depend upon the extent and powers of expansion of the home market. When we have enough land under small holder cultivation to supply this market, there will, in the ordinary course of things, follow a fall in prices of such kinds

¹ If our rulers had been wise enough to let foreign follies alone there might some day have been an export trade for British jams. When bounty-fed sugar was entering our ports at a much lower price than it was selling at in the countries producing it, it might have been possible to export jam made from small holder's fruit—if we had had the small holders. Unfortunately foreign Governments recovered their senses, and ours lost theirs too soon for such a trade to develop.

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of food stuffs, and a check will be placed on the demand for small holdings. We shall have come, for the time being at least, to the end of possible developments that way. Last year we imported about £70,000,000 worth of food stuffs which might conceivably have been produced at home, not including beef, mutton, and cereals. I am convinced that the consumption of these food stuffs could and should be greatly increased. The British working classes get far too few vegetables and milk products; but even so, I think it quite likely that, *given free scope to the desire for land among rural labourers*, it would not take many years till this came about. Certainly an area as large as Yorkshire, cultivated as the small holder would cultivate it, would supply all the possible demand, and that would leave the great majority of English land still under the old system. When England is ready that, too, must go, but meantime there will still be room for partridges and foxes, the hunt will not yet have passed behind the hill, though a tithe of English land has been withdrawn for nobler uses.

The change would, nevertheless, already be fundamental. Every labourer could get a holding whenever he wished to, and that would mean

Hodge on the Council

that no labourer would ever again be subject to the "tyranny of the countryside." Contracts of service between farmers and labourers would henceforth be bargains between free men, and would only be possible on the basis of a living wage. Neither squire nor farmer would be able to prevent the labourer saying what he thought. This would be good for the labourer ; I suspect it would be even better morally for the squire and the farmer. The Parish Councils would become free, and unwelcome and unaccustomed figures would appear even on the exclusive County Council itself. At present the English capitalist farmer has apparently no political grievance that places him at odds with the landlord, for he nearly invariably elects some prominent landowner for Parliament. Apparently his most serious grievance is the amount of local rates, his chief ambition to secure a tariff on imported food stuffs. For these reasons he is generally a stout Tory, and sides with his landlord in keeping the labourer in his place. It is now clear he is not going to get his tariff on food stuffs, but there is something to be said for his complaint about rates. The Agricultural Rating Act was a most clumsy and unjust device,

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but I think people who live in country districts have a real grievance in this matter of rating. The Education rate especially is very unfair to the country, now that so large a number of the children educated in rural schools afterwards go to live in towns and pay rates in their turn for urban districts. The proper course for Lord Salisbury's government was to take such essentially national charges as Education off the rates altogether, and to secure that this relief to the country tenant did not simply lead to an increase of rent. But from the burden of rates, ever increasing as they must do with the demands of an advancing civilisation, the farmer will never be freed until the local authorities have an assured income altogether apart from the rates. Not till then will he get real security of tenure, release from the depredations of game, a landlord who regards his farm solely as a means of increasing the wealth of the land.

I doubt very much whether the farmer will ever emancipate himself; he is too innately conservative, has too much reverence for the squire for that. It may possibly be the despised labourer, independent and with a hold on the soil, whose appearance on the County Councils

The Problem of Towns

will win freedom for his master. Lord Strachey's wish that the County Councils should become the great landowners will only be fulfilled when the County Councils are made up of people who heartily favour the policy.

Meantime there is a problem yet more urgent, as urgent, indeed, as the provision of small holdings for the labourers. The housing conditions of the working classes in town and country are a disgrace to modern civilisation; the aspect of our great industrial centres is abhorrent to any one who cares for order, health, or beauty. It is imperatively necessary that our towns should undertake and should have powers to execute large plans for developing the town of the future and for pulling down and rebuilding the town of the present. The industrial towns of the nineteenth century began at the centre, and, hampered by land monopoly, extended *outwards*, as the people were crowded beyond endurance, to a too narrow circumference. The towns of the twentieth must be rebuilt from a wide circumference, on land owned by the people, *inwards*. Practically unlimited powers to purchase and plan out land round their borders should be given to our municipalities, and far more drastic

The Land Hunger

ones to order the closing *without compensation* of slums *after adequate new houses have been built*. Meantime it is strange with what misplaced pride people in our cities will show you round the "sights" of each place. If the visitor has any vision, one text may well keep running through his mind, "There shall not be left of thee one stone upon another that shall not be pulled down."

In a recent book I urged the nationalisation of our waste and mountain lands, and the use of them partly as vast national recreation grounds or parks, and partly for the provision of a national water supply for country as well as town, and for afforestation, where suitable. In this chapter I am only dealing with England, because the Irish land question is, for the present at least, mainly settled on lines approved by the Irish people, and the peculiarities of the land question in Scotland have been dealt with by experts on the question in former chapters of this book. It is to be remembered, however, that about thirty million acres of land in the United Kingdom are at present not cultivated at all, mostly for the very good reason that they are quite unfit for tillage or even decent

The Use of the Wastes

pasture. The sport to be obtained on them is largely apart from the fox-hunting and partridge-shooting over cultivated acres of old English country life. It is the recreation of the millionaire, often the foreign millionaire, or the great noble, not of the country gentleman; it is not rooted in the life of the country. But the practical reservation of all this vast area for the pleasures of a few is only less mischievous than the land monopoly in more fertile country. The buying out of all landlords' rights in waste and moor land on a fair basis should not be a very costly thing, and should be at once done by the State itself, and the whole should be handed over to the Development Commissioners to carry out some such scheme as that suggested in the last chapter of *Modern Democracy*.

How is all this to be accomplished? In *The Opportunity of Liberalism* I urged the vital importance of the Budget taxation of land values to obtain a basis on which local governing bodies and the State could assess the compensation to be paid whenever land is required for any public purpose. The natural development of democracy has hitherto been

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checked at every turn by the power of landlords to exact compensation, not on the basis of what the land is worth to them the way it is used now, but on what it *will* be worth to the buyers the way *they* propose to use it. Effective land reform certainly implies the passing altogether, in the long run, of the present order of things, but it is not necessarily inconsistent with its gradual and peaceful passing away; it does not necessarily threaten the unhappy landlord with immediate extinction or starvation. What it does imply is a full and free opportunity for the new life in town and country to grow. It is a perfectly fair test to apply to any new demand for land that its advocates should be willing to compensate the present holders on the basis of what the land has hitherto been worth to *them*. If the new departure cannot afford to do that, it must be a very doubtful new departure indeed. Until it can afford so much, no new scheme can really be said to prove its right to supplant the old, its practical superiority, which must in the last resort be its justification. The national valuation of all land now proceeding will, if made the legal basis for all public purchases of land, exactly fulfil the requirements for which I

Obstructive Reformers

advocated taxation of land values.¹ If to it were added an Act giving general powers to local authorities or the State to buy land whenever they wanted it and for any purpose, the land question would soon solve itself. Future progress would depend upon the amount of enterprise and public spirit among the people themselves, as indeed it ought to do.

But here we come into conflict with a very earnest and aggressive school of Land Reformers. I do not suppose that the scheme of Land Reform just outlined will secure the support of the English country gentlemen, but that is not because the proposal is unreasonable or unjust to them. It secures for them adequate compensation for any land really needed for the growth of the nation, and safe possession of their remaining lands until modernity has found a better use for them. Were I as convinced that the present system was the best that could be devised as I am to the contrary, I should still put no legal obstacle in the way of the growth of public ownership on these terms. Public ownership will and can only grow as it proves

¹ Local authorities, however, as in some of the Colonies, should have the option of levying the whole or part of their *rates* on land values.

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itself to be better than private ; and if the virtues of public ownership are a delusion, the sooner we have a free field for experiment, the sooner the fraud will be discovered, and we shall be rid of it for ever. It is the suspicion that there is no delusion that embitters the opposition ; were it not for this we should soon have enough land to teach us wisdom. Even the most reasonable and public spirited of landlords, however, might well be excused for opposing a proposal to raise all revenues by taxes on land values. I have the very highest respect for some of those who advocate the Single Tax, but I fear their propaganda is likely to do more harm than good, and that in two ways. In the first instance it gives the landlord a case. The private owner has really nothing to say in reason against any proposal to buy him out on fair terms when the people have found a better use for his land. It is practically impossible for him to enlist public opinion on his side if he objects, for the public will recognise that he has been fairly treated. The fairness of the Single Taxer's method is, however, to say the least of it, not self-evident ; there are always sure to be a large number of people who will sympathise with the landlord.

Single Tax and Reaction

Against such a method even the most reasonable landlord must fight to the uttermost, and a good many other people will support him.

But the Single Taxer is even more objectionable when he definitely sides with the reactionaries. Probably no more absurd policy could have been adopted than that of which the Hanley bye-election of last year may be regarded as the central incident. The Labour Party in this country is, of course, strongly in favour of the taxation of land values. But the Labour Party is also in favour of public authorities being permitted to buy land on reasonable terms, in fact of carrying on their communal life in the way most pleasing to them. To the Single Taxer the first of these ideas was altogether admirable, the second was anathema. The Single Taxer seems to possess a mind singularly like that of Lord Lansdowne. The one would impose private ownership on the labourers, only two out of a hundred of whom desire it; the other objects to the people collectively buying land even when they want to do so. For note this: there is no question of *compelling* the municipal statesmen of Manchester or Glasgow to buy land when they have no use for it—the

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question of each individual purchase would have to be thrashed out locally on its own merits—the question is whether great communities of grown-up men and women having developed plans for the improvement of their own towns shall be allowed to carry them out or not. The campaign was amusing enough in another way, for, as it happens, the Labour Party is the only one that can be relied upon to support any proposal for taxing land values that is likely to be carried for the next twenty years.

Earlier in the Session Mr Wedgwood on behalf of the land values group had distinguished himself by opposing a private Bill to enable public authorities to buy land on payment of compensation based on the valuation for taxation purposes. In this way he ranged the Single Tax party against the whole modern progressive movement. Mr Wedgwood spent a good many years of his life in a northern city, and must be perfectly familiar with the dreary streets to the west of it. The children unfortunate enough to live there have ready access only to two open spaces, the one a free gift to the town—perhaps Mr Wedgwood might not object to that—but the other purchased a generation ago by the

Not Doctrines but Freedom

Corporation. They were, I doubt not, monstrously overcharged for it, for there was then no such fair means of assessing compensation such as was provided for in the Bill opposed by Mr Wedgwood, but, nevertheless, I am glad the city bought it. Probably no money was ever invested by the Corporation to better advantage.

For it cannot be too strongly insisted upon that what we want is not doctrines but freedom—freedom for the new English life to replace the old. How rapidly this can happen, or how much greater the new life shall be than the old, depends primarily on what of public spirit and initiative, of what of valiancy of thought and action lie latent in the English people themselves. Before the free forces of democracy the last remains of feudalism will finally pass away peacefully enough, probably not in our day, possibly not in that of our children. Feudalism will pass, however, replaced by a new life stronger than itself, and will become of interest only to the historian.

And what will his verdict be? The hunt has passed beyond the hill, and is now out of sight and hearing. To the philosophic watcher, perhaps, it remains a picturesque memory of gay coats and galloping horses, of daring and splendid men

The Land Hunger

and women. He is a stranger and sees things, like the historian, from afar. But there are toil-worn figures returning from the fields, such as have written many of the letters in this book, whose lot it will be ever, under conditions fairer or more harsh, to till the fields of England. These note only that the grass has been trampled under foot and that the hedges are broken down.

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LANCASHIRE BRANCH, *Secretary*, J. F. THOMPSON, 63 Hilton Street, Higher Broughton, Manchester.

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English League for the Taxation of Land Values :

Secretary, F. VERINDER, 376 and 377 Strand, London, W.C.

Scottish League for the Taxation of Land Values :

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Portsmouth League for the Taxation of Land Values:

Isle of Thanet Branch of the English League for the Taxation of Land Values:

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Birkenhead Land Values League:

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(2) "The election of representatives to Parliament who will support these objects.

(3) "The defence of crofters and cottars who may be threatened with eviction or subjected to oppressive measures by landlords or their agents."

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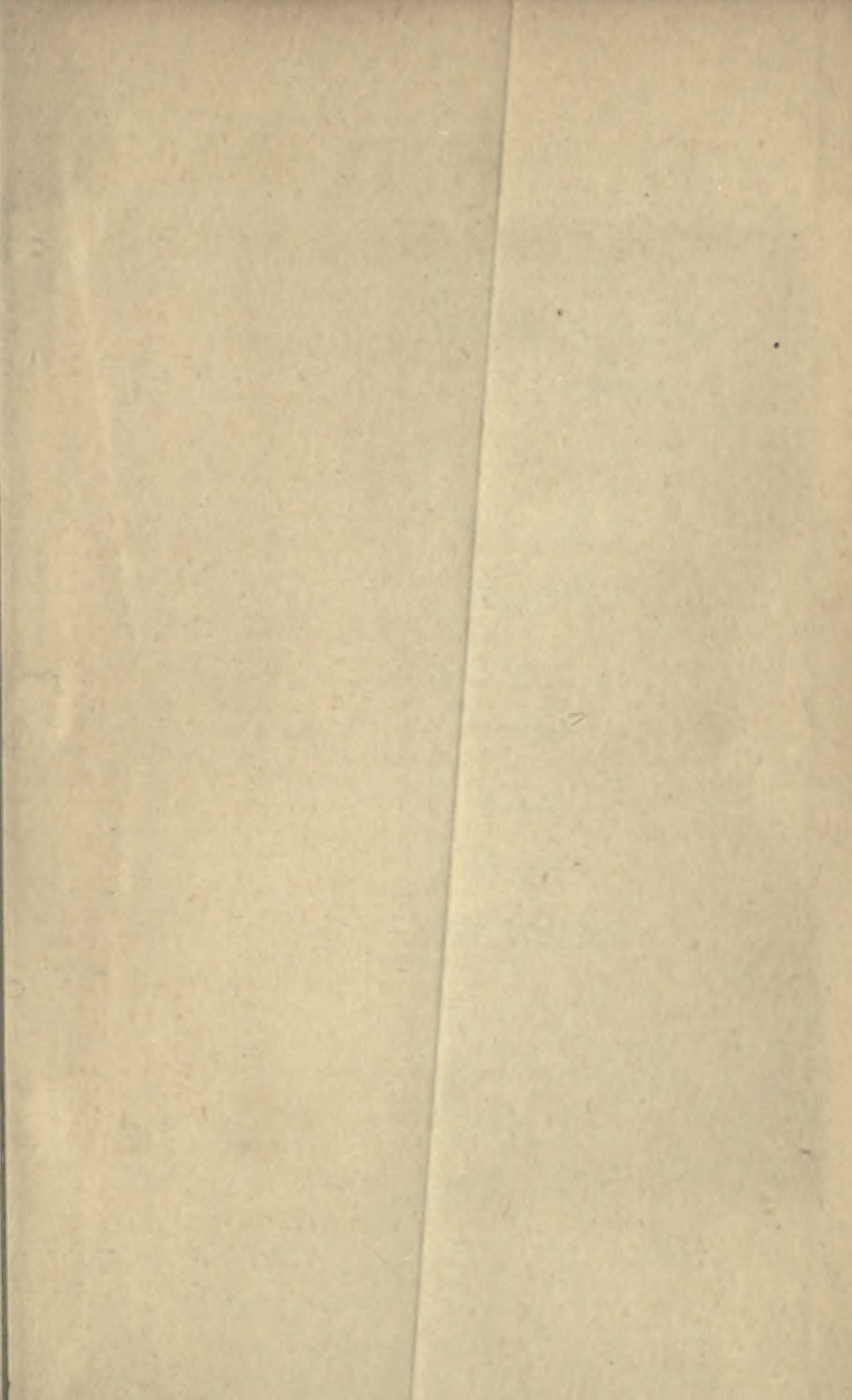
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